

A Story About Life

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1. An Introduction

Happy new year everyone!! Here's my newest story, A Story of Luck.

Disclaimer: I do not own Hairspray, or any of the characters in it. I am just a mere fan of the musical, and I am using the characters from the musical for my fanfic. I am, however, responsible for the character of Jane.

Alright-y. This is my first Hairspray fanfic, and, in my opinion, it is really odd. First of all, while browsing through the Hairspray fics, I have not seen any Corny/OC fics or Tracy having any siblings. This story just came up to me while I was watching the movie for the umpteenth time, after watching an episode of Law and Order:CI. So, it's rather odd. But I think it has potential. This is rated M because the introduction has a very sensitive topic in it, and there are references to said event throughout the story.

I think that the introduction is a little iffy; but I promise you that the rest of the story will be better.

Oh, and in the first (maybe) and second chapters, Corny may seem a little odd and out of character, but throughout the story I'm going to develop my view on him more, and hopefully he'll be like the Corny we saw in the movie.

Now, I am done babbling. Enjoy!

* * *

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Jane Turnblad was not attractive, and she didn't even consider herself 'cute'. Unlike her sister, who looked exactly like their mother, plump, beautiful, and curvaceous, she looked like her father. She had plain reddish-blond hair that instead of curled nicely, came out in a frizzy clump. She was rather sickly looking, thin, and barely had any breasts. Also, she wasn't talented like her younger sister, Tracy. She couldn't dance or sing as wonderfully as Tracy could. But, she read more than anyone in her grade. She was smart, and, in her twelfth grade English teacher's opinion, she wrote beautifully and could make a famous author one day. But with the whole dance rage going on, who cared about books and their writers? No one.

Despite the small feelings of jealousy and slight resentment against the great dancer she had as a sister, and despite her hate for all the dancing and singing that was slowly taking over everything, Jane still loved her sister dearly, and was quite close to her. It was just that watching those girls dance on TV with Tracy made her feel insecure.

While Tracy would dance to the Corny Collins show in the living room, Jane would sit next to her mother's iron, folding the clothes, and then carefully packaging them up so they'd be ready to be returned to the person they belonged to.

She loved the smell of the laundry detergent her mother used to wash the clothing. It was subtle and soothing, and smelled like lavender and vanilla.

Tonight, however, she was simply lying on the couch. Her father was down in the joke shop, her mother was cooking dinner, and her sister in her room; she was supposedly doing her homework, but Jane knew that she was dancing and singing to herself instead.

It was a warm, stuffy night. While other college students were in their dorms studying, or sleeping, she was walking back to her dorm after studying at her friend's dorm, she was taking a break from studying for her finals. She was in the park that students hung around in during the day, and in the night, it was scary, like a horror film. Her arms were wrapped around herself, and despite the warmth, she shivered. She had the feeling that someone was following her, but she put that thought in the back of her mind, since she felt that everyone thought that when they were walking alone in the dark.

But then, she was on the ground. Someone was on top of her, keeping her on the ground, and their wrist was pressing against her mouth, preventing her from making any noise. "If you put up a fight, I'll kill you." A gruff voice said. His breath smelled like alcohol, and made her cringe. "If you scream or fight, you're dead."

He removed his wrist from her mouth, and she gasped; it was intended to be a scream, but she could not find it in herself to scream. "Please," She whispered. "Just let me go."

With the palm of his hand, he slapped her temple, making her head throb slightly. "You don't think I would let you go that easy, do you?" He was smiling, and his heavy weight that was being pressed upon her body was starting to hurt her.

She screamed, he got out a knife and put it to her throat. "What did I tell you earlier, little girl?" He was angry. "You're dead now."

And out of pure fear, she kicked him in between the legs. For a split second, he was off of her, and she was running. Her hair was flying wildly behind her as she ran, and as she heard his footsteps running after her, she thought that her feet would fail her. It was a mixture of her fear, and him kicking her that brought her to the ground once again. Her face was in the ground, and she could feel the cold metal of his knife on the back of her head, so if she lifted her head to abruptly, her neck would be sliced.

"_Please," Her muffled voice pleaded as she grabbed the grass in her sweating fists, the soft mud getting stuck underneath her fingernails._

The knife moved slowly, and she almost wasn't sure if he really had moved it, because she was used to the cold blade touching her skin. "Stand up." He said, and she could feel him get to his feet. She remained in the dirt. "STAND UP!" He shouted as slowly, she got to her feet. Her face was red, dirty, and hot, and tears were slowly rolling down her face. "Don'tâ€¦" She started slowly, her voice shaking. "Please don't kill me." She finished. She was going to beg him not to hurt her, but the throbbing in her temple and rest of her body had reminded her that he had already hurt her, and he would probably hurt her some more.

"_I-I have my father's watch onâ€¦ my little sister made me a necklace before I leftâ€¦ it-it's probably useless, but if you sell it at a pawn shop you, you could probably get s-something."_

"_I don't want your things." He grumbled crudely before looking her up and down. "Take your clothes off."_

"_No," She said, and without thinking, she blurted out. "My mother said I couldn't until I'm married."_

He laughed as he whipped out the knife, but as he went to open it, it flew out of his hands and was lost within the broken alcohol bottles and grass. Now, he was angry. He stepped closer to her. He was so close she could feel the warmth of his breath, which smelled so horrible she cringed again. His fists were raised. "Do what I say." He hit her face, making her head turn to the side. More tears started to fall.

"_N-no."_

She received more blows, and him yelling at her to do what he was telling her to do, and finally, after enduring all that she could, she obeyed him. Sobbing silently, she took off her dress.

"_The bra," He grumbled as she fumbled behind herself and unhooked her bra. He grabbed it and threw it to the ground. Suddenly, there was a metallic taste in her mouth as he told her to take off her panties, stockings, and shoes. Slowly, she did, and as she felt his eyes look at her, she wanted to throw up._

"_I-I am cold." She whimpered as he pushed her to the ground, and was on top of her, and as her mouth was open, he placed his on top of

hers and inserted his tongue in her mouth; the metallic taste was back, but stronger. Tears rolled down her face as he stopped. "Don't just lie here, kiss back." He hissed firmly in her ear as she shook her head. He grabbed her shoulders firmly. "Now."_

And so, she did.

_Afterwards, he placed his hands on her breasts, and grabbed them. She thought that maybe if they were larger, it would hurt less. She bit down on her lip, and soon the taste of blood joined the metallic taste that was now lingering inside her mouth. _

"_Please," Her voice was now hoarse. "Can I get dressed now? Please?"_

"_No." And within a few minutes, he was undressed. Tears were staining her face, and her throat was making rattling noises. It was now, as he moved up and down against her body, when she wished she had screamed and fought, so he would've killed her instead._

Quickly, he told her to put her bra and panties back on. And at first, she thought it was merely her imagination, but it wasn't, and first she put her panties back on, and then, turning around she re-hooked her bra. Her stockings were now ripped and useless, and she could not find her shoes. This was her second chance to run from him, but she didn't. It was like there was a weight inside of her, keeping her in the park.

He told her to give him a blowjob; she had heard of it, but she didn't know what to do. "W-what?" She whimpered.

"_Just put your mouth on it," He said, indicating his penis. "And suck."_

"_Like a straw?" She croaked. "I never did this before, I'm a virgin."_

"_Yes," He said firmly. "Like a straw. Stop shaking."_

She did as he said, and along with the metallic taste that resided in her mouth, there was now a taste of rubber. She gagged; he pushed her head away. "Not like that," He growled. "Do you know how to do anything?"

_She sobbed. "I'm sorry, I never did this before. Can you just let me go, please?" _

He didn't say anything for a few moments, and before he could say anything, a group of students who were leaving a nearby party had shouted something (probably about how the two of them looked) and if they only knew the predicament she was in, she could've escaped. "What's your name?"

"_Jane." She couldn't lie._

"_You said something about a watch?"_

_She looked down at the watch her father gave her; it was actually his mothers a long time ago. "You can't have it. I changed my mind.

It's my father's, you can't have it."_

The right side of her head collided with the brick walkway, and a shuddering gasp escaped her throat. "I said you can't have it," She said weakly, before getting her head hit again and again.

More tears rolled down her face as she weakly unlatched the old watch. "Take it, just leave me alone." She felt his hand go in hers and took the watch that her father treasured deeply, and her heart ached.

It was silent; she lay on the ground, her head resting on the bricks. She could hear him shuffling, and she thought that maybe he was getting dressed. Then, she felt the cloth of her dress hit her back, and she slowly started to lift herself up. "Get dressed." He said, and with shaking hands, she put her dress back on. It stuck to the bloody parts of her body. She remained kneeling on the ground, holding her breath with fear.

"_You're a pretty girl Jane." He whispered, and she heard his footsteps. At first, she thought that he was walking towards her, and clenched her fists and tightly closed her eyes. But, a few seconds later, she realized that he had left; she was safe at last._

Jane woke up and wiped the sweat off of her brow, it must've been late, because her mother was in the other room ironing, and Tracy was probably sleeping in her room. Once again Jane had woken up with the nightmare that had plagued her dreams for the past eleven months; but this wasn't just an ordinary nightmare, for last June Jane had experienced this on her college's campus in Washington, DC.

Slowly, she got off of the couch, and grabbed a chair and put it next to her mother's iron, and started to fold clothes.

2. A Copy of The Catcher in the Rye

Jane Turnblad has no future, but she used to. She was going to be a teacher, an English teacher, to be exact, but after her rape she left her school in Washington DC, and decided that she was too scared to go back. For three months, she laid on her couch, watching television with either her sister, mother, or father, but once they came in she felt uneasy. She refused to tell them what happened to her, she did not want their vision of her to change even more than it already did. To them, she was different. Because someone beat her and took advantage to her and nearly killed her, she was a stranger to her family.

After four months, her mother gave her the inspiration to get off of the couch and go outside. One night, as she sat with her mother watching the television, her mother told her that she needed to put this behind her; she wasn't going to forget what happened, but she shouldn't let the pain of the past turn her into a zombie. Edna Turnblad used herself as an example; because she was so afraid of how people would think about her, she didn't leave the house. She told her oldest daughter that she didn't want that kind of life for Jane, and after that, Jane took her mother's words and lived by them. She wasn't herself, but slowly, she was getting there.

Going outside again after the rape was harder than Jane thought it

would be. She was constantly afraid, and she saw his dark, shadowy face everywhere. She felt his hands cover her mouth again and again, and she didn't trust those around her.

She sought refuge in the library she grew up going to, the one her father took her to everyday before Tracy was born, and while Tracy was a young baby. It was the place where she and her father could be alone together, to get their father-daughter time in. After Tracy was old enough to start reading books, Wilbur brought her along with them, but clearly, Tracy was not fond of all the books and knowledge in the library, and soon after, Tracy stopped going. When she was about thirteen, and could start going to places on her own, Wilbur stopped going also, so he could work more hours at his shop.

At first, Jane sat at the tables, reading a large amount of books, feeling depressed. Her high school peers started their sophomore year of college, while she remained in Baltimore, timid and afraid. After a few weeks, Jane was offered a job at the library, and soon began helping with everything. It was now her dream job; she was safe and secure with the old librarian and the books.

It was Thursday afternoon, and Jane was sitting on the couch, helping her mother package clothes. She glanced at the clock, which read 3:58, and at any moment Tracy and her friend Penny would come barging in to dance and sing to the Corny Collin's show, which was on at four.

The door slammed open at 3:59, and Tracy, who was practically dragging Penny in the living room, turned on the television and started jumping up and down lightly. The Corny Collin's show was now starting.

_Hey there, Teenage Baltimore! _

_Don't change that channel! _

_ 'Cause it's time for the Corny _

_Collins Show! Brought to you by _

Ultra Clutch Hairspray!

Jane had the Corny Collin's theme song memorized, for every day in those four months she stayed on the couch at home Tracy would watch and dance along with it. At first, Tracy was hesitant about watching the Corny Collin's show around her sister, as if the dancing and singing would make her feel worse, and after Jane insisted that it was fine for her sister to watch it, Tracy would finally give in. Jane could tell that her sister worried, though, because as she would dance, she would suddenly stop to look at Jane, to see if anything was wrong, and numerous times each day Jane had to convince Tracy that she was alright. But after a few weeks, everything was fine, and Tracy stopped hesitating to see if her sister was all right, and just kept on dancing.

Deep down, Jane liked watching Corny Collins, there was just something about his grin that drew her into him, like a magnetic force, and his voice was deep and smooth.

Everyday, Edna Turnblad would complain about the volume the girl's

had the TV on, and how the music and dancing was melting the girl's brains into mud. Tracy and Penny were explaining to Edna about the new dance, that had something to do with chickens, when Prudy Pingleton, Penny's mother, walked in to get her pants. In a desperate rush, Penny almost knocked Jane backwards as she jumped behind the couch.

Before she was afraid of the entire male gender, she thought that the only person who would truly scare her was Prudy Pingleton. There was no one on the Earth like her, and deep down, Jane thanked God for that. Prudy was strict and stern, and limited her daughter from everything, and frankly, she was just plain frightening. The angry look on her face seemed permanent, and never once did Jane see the woman smile.

Tracy tried to save her friend, but as she told her mother not to let Mrs. Pingleton know that her daughter was at their house without her permission, Edna, shocked that her daughter would think that she would lie to a client, let Prudy know where her daughter was, and the two of them left; Penny was now banned from the Turnblad's house.

Jane had a feeling that Tracy and Edna were going to fight, again. So, grabbing her sweater and putting it on, she said, "I'm going to the library." And left.

She hated it when her mother and sister fought, it was all because Tracy, unlike their parents, and now her, did not see past Baltimore; she saw the world and all of the exotic places, and sought fame, glamour, and fortune. Edna, however, was afraid that her daughter, who was obviously not the thinnest girl in her class, would get hurt when she finally went out to get her big break.

The library was only a few minutes from the Turnblad's house, which made it an easy place to go escape to when she didn't want to be home. She opened the large glass entrance door, and walked towards one of the bookcases that held fiction books. Sometimes, she picked books she had never heard of before, but most of the time, she would pick up old pieces of fiction that she loved dearly, and had read many times.

Swiftly, she walked up and down the aisles, her finger brushing against the spines of the books as she walked. She stopped every once in a while to put a book in its proper place, because it was what she was used to doing during the day.

It was warm in the library, and Jane regretted bringing her sweater with her, and it was then when she noticed that the sweater didn't even match the dress she was wearing. Quickly, she took it off and draped it over her arm as she continued to look around for something to read. Finally, she found something that had always interested her, Gone With the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell. She took the old book in her hand, and sat down at one of the tables that was scattered nearby the bookshelves, and began to read.

If someone asked her to, she could recite most of Gone With the Wind, she knew certain parts line by line, and others she knew only a little bit, but if someone asked her for the summary of the book, Jane would go into a whole tangent about the book, it's beauty, and what it is about.

She was on chapter three when the head librarian called her to the front table. Frowning slightly as she closed the book, Jane went up to see what the old woman wanted. "Yes?" She asked sweetly.

"I know you're not working right now," The librarian said. "But this young man here needs help finding a book." The librarian pointed to the person standing next to her, and looking over, Jane realized that it was Corny Collins himself. Quickly, she looked up at the clock on the wall, which read five o'clock.

Thinking about Corny Collins being away from the Corny Collins show was like thinking about teachers having a life outside of school. It was rarely thought about, and once you saw your history teacher, or Corny Collins, outside of their "territory" it was strange.

"What are you looking for?" She asked him, expecting him to tell me the name of a biography of a dancer or singer.

"_The Catcher in the Rye._" He responded, and without even thinking, she blurted out:

"You read?" She covered my mouth quickly. "Oh golly, I'm sorry- I was thinking about your theme song" she bit down on my lip as she slowly moved her hand away from her mouth.

"Follow me," She sighed as she led him to the bookshelf that held the book that he wanted.

"I rarely read, actually," Corny said as she knelt down to get the book. "So you watch my show?"

He was standing close to her, and whenever she felt that someone was standing too close to her, she started to shake slightly. It was a good thing she was on the ground, because if he noticed that she was shaking, he would think it was because she was trying to balance herself. When she breathed in and smelled his cologne, she could almost smell an after smell of sickly sweet cherries, of alcohol.

"Actually, I don't." She replied as she picked up the book and gave it to him. "My sister does every single day. She watches it so much I've memorized the theme song. Here, I'll come ring that book up."

"I have a problem with that," He said as she stood up. When she stood up she found herself inches away from him, and she had to move back before she started to shake even more.

"Why? Are you suddenly angry that I indicated that I thought you were illiterate, or because I don't watch your show?" To some extent, she was being serious, but in actuality, she was joking.

"I don't have a library card," He said, a bigger smile growing on his face. "And you don't watch my show."

"Well I'm sure that Mrs. Johnston can help you about the library card," She said.

"What? You're not going to give me a library card?"

"I have to go. I'm not working tonight I was just reading. If I were working, I guess I could've helped you with the card. But, if I stay here any longer, my mother will kill me."

"Well, when do you work?" He asked.

"Tomorrow from seven 'till twelve, why?" She asked.

"Well, I'll go put this back, and come back tomorrow at eleven thirty so you can help me again," Corny smiled, her heart jumped in her throat. "Then by the time you're done helping me, you'll be done work, and we can go get lunchâ€|? I know a nice hamburger joint."

"Oh, well, butâ€| Mrs. Johnston can help you now with thatâ€|" She said as she placed her hand on the back of her neck. "You don't need to waste thirty minutes here to do something that will only take five minutesâ€|"

She chuckled nervously. "You don't even know what my name is." She added.

"Well I will when I ask you," Corny replied. "What is your name?"

She hesitated, and looked down and her black, scuffed Mary Jane's. "My name is Jane."

"I'll see you tomorrow at eleven thirty, Jane." Corny smiled as he put the book on a cart. "I can put that there, right?"

She swallowed. "Right."

And he left, smiling.

3. A Quiet Library Chat

The metallic taste that had resided in her mouth throughout her rape had never left her mouth, and so, to rid her mouth of the taste, Jane sucked on peppermints. She had two cans of them in her room, and a can of them at the library. Every Sunday, she would go to the convenient store down the street to buy three bags of peppermints for her cans. She shoved a handful of peppermints in her pockets, just in case she needed one when she wasn't near her cans. The mints didn't just get rid of the taste, but in a way, they soothed her.

It was at 11:25 when she popped her third peppermint in eight minutes in her mouth with shaking hands. She regretted not giving the determined Corny Collins his library card in five minutes the previous night, instead of letting him come today, and staying with her. If she had what she wanted, he wouldn't be coming back for her in less than five minutes.

The library was quiet today; besides her, there were only four other people in the library. One was an old man, who was looking at the science fiction novels, and the other person was a young woman, who was looking at the children's books with her two young children. The next librarian wasn't going to come in until she left.

When the peppermint had dissolved in her mouth, she began to chew on her left cheek, and leaned her elbow on the table. She hated working on weekday mornings, because that was when she was almost alone. The afternoon and early evening was her favorite time to work, because there were more people, and sometimes Tracy and Penny came to "study" (they actually just sat at the front desk and talked to Jane until she had to leave.)

But now, there was just silence. The clock read 11:28, and slowly, she unwrapped yet another peppermint and put it in her mouth. Even when her previous peppermints had masqueraded the horrible taste in her mouth, Jane continued to eat them one after another, to insure that the taste will be covered for a long time.

She tried to stop eating the peppermints once about three months ago, when she almost choked on one. But, she found that her substitutes for the peppermints had failed, so she just made sure she was more careful when moving it around her mouth.

11:30. It was like Corny Collin's was waiting for the exact moment that the clock changed, because soon after Jane saw the clock change, he walked in. She assumed that he came early, looking at his watch so he could come early. He looked tired, but he was smiling.

"Hello, Jane." He said as he approached the front desk. Mrs. Johnston had left a copy of The Catcher in the Rye on the shelf behind her, and before she handed him the book, she got a card from the stack in a drawer in the desk, and asked him to put his name on the back. After he did so, she rung up the book and handed it and the card to him.

"Have you read this before?" He asked.

"Three times."

"Do you think I'll like it?" He replied.

"I don't know," She told him. "It depends on what you like to read."

"My little sister wrote me and told me to read it," He informed her. "So I thought that I should give it a try."

"That's nice." She put another peppermint in her mouth.

He pulled a chair from the table in front of the front desk and placed it before her, and sat down. "So do you know how to pass about twenty-five minutes here?"

"Read." She paused.

"I know what you're about to say." He said, his smile growing.

"What is it that I am going to say, then?" She asked.

"You're not seriously going to stay here until I'm finished, are you?" He replied.

That was what she was going to ask him.

"No," She lied. "I wasn't going to say that."

"Then what were you going to say?"

"Another good way to pass the time is to talk, or shelve books that people lazily leave lying around." She said.

"Talk to what, the walls?" He grinned, and she frowned. "I'm kidding." He added.

"When people are here, I talk to them."

He was quiet, and she started to bite the skin around her nails. It had been about three minutes since her last peppermint, and she was trying to limit herself of them until he left. However, the minty taste was fading, and soon it would be taken over by the metallic taste that she could vaguely taste in the back of her throat.

"Are you from Baltimore, Jane?" He asked.

"Yeah," Her voice was softer as she moved her finger away from her mouth. "Are you?"

"I'm not from Baltimore, but I've lived in two different parts of Maryland my whole life," He replied. "My parents got a divorce when I was ten, and my father lived in Wheaton and my mother in Silver Spring, after high school graduation, I came here."

"Did you go to college here?" She asked.

He shook his head. "I didn't go to college." He told her. "Do you go to college here, or are you still in high school?"

"I went to college in Washington last year, but I didn't go back this year," She replied. "I decided to take a break."

"I just didn't go to college." He said as she shoved a peppermint in her mouth. She kept her hands on the desk, and if she didn't have them firmly placed on the hard wood, they would be shaking.

"Some people don't." She said, her voice was slightly slurred because of the peppermint that was occupying her mouth.

"You really like those things, don't you?" He asked her, briefly pointing to the can of peppermints on the desk.

She nodded as she pushed the peppermint to the right side of her face, making her cheek stick out. Corny smiled. "They are good. Can I have one?"

She stuck her hand in the can once again, and handed him a peppermint. She felt her heart rush like it did when she was pushed down into the grass on that warm June night when his hand brushed against hers. After he took the peppermint, unwrapped it, and popped it in his mouth, she put her hand on her collarbone, as though it would help calm her.

"The way you're sucking on that peppermint and your cheek makes you look like a fish." Jane just stared at him before biting down hard on

her peppermint, and swallowing the remains.

"Do you like dancing?" He asked her.

"No, I don't." She said.

"Are you sure?" He asked. "Because I know this great new dance moves that I can show you."

11:52. "I'm sure." She replied. "I'm horrible at dancing."

"I can teach you how."

"No." She said firmly, as the metallic taste started coming back. She stood up and stepped a few steps back from it. The old man who was looking at the science fiction came up to the front desk with his books. Jane rung them out, and handed him the books, and his worn out card back. She smiled at him sweetly as he left.

"Come on, it'll be fun." He smirked.

She sighed. "I'm working."

"Standing behind the desk and staring at me with your hands on your hips is working?" He asked, a grin flashed across his face.

"Well when more people come, I'll have work to do."

"So in a few seconds a wave of people will come, and in six minutes, they'll all be done?" He asked.

She frowned. "I don't dance."

"I can teach you how to." He said.

"But I don't want to know how to dance." She replied, unwrapping another peppermint with her shaking hands, and slowly putting it in her mouth.

"You're a very stubborn girl, baby Jane," He said. "And you're really fond of those peppermints, aren't you?"

Jane bit her lip, her peppermint once again made her left cheek stick out. She hugged herself with her shaking arms, and simply stared at him.

"You look pretty when you're mad."

She scoffed as her peppermint almost got stuck in her throat. The candy was now pressing against her lips as she held three fingers against her mouth. She waited a few seconds until she bit down on the mint candy.

"You okay?" He asked, and she nodded.

It was at 11:58 when the second librarian came in. She was in her thirties, and had bright red hair and was really sweet. Jane grabbed her maroon sweater, and before walking away from the front desk, she put a handful of peppermints in her pocket. She heard Corny follow her to the door. "So, how about those hamburgers?" He asked. His hand

was on her shoulder, making her shoulder blades move back, and her heart go in her throat.

"No. I'm not hungry," She told him. "And I promised my mother I would help her fold laundry right after work."

"Okay, fine." Corny said as they walked out of the library. "But I insist that I walk you home."

"You don't know where I live."

"I'll follow you."

Jane rolled her eyes as she stuck her hands in her sweater's pockets. She took all of her peppermints in her fist as she walked down the sidewalk. "There is no need to," She said. "I live a few seconds away."

"I think I should accompany you, though," He said. "You don't know what could happen. Some man can come out of that alleyway and mug you."

Jane clenched her jaw. "I've walked to and from the library everyday, and nothing has happened. I don't think that it will change today."

"It's better to be safe than sorry." Corny said as they crossed the street and entered her block.

"We're on my block," She said. "There is really no need for you to follow me."

She stopped in front of the Hardy Har Hut. "I'm home now, you can go and do whatever you want now."

"You live in the Hardy Har Hut?" He asked.

She grasped the handle of the door to her father's shop. "I live above it. It's my father's shop. I assure you, I am safe now."

He smiled. "Good-bye, baby Jane." He said. "I'll see you when I finish this book, or when I go to renew it."

"Bye." Jane mumbled as she opened the door and walked into her father's store. Looking behind her, and through the glass door, she saw Corny smile before walking down the sidewalk.

4. A New Star is Born

Jane's mother was her favorite person in the world. Edna Turnblad was a large woman with an even larger heart, and her heart was so big and she was so loving, Jane was surprised that her heart didn't burst from all the love and compassion she had in it. Jane also pitied her mother. In eleven years, Edna Turnblad had not left the house. Whenever she or Tracy would try to get their mother to go outside, her mother would explain that she was ashamed of how she looked, and how she would go out after her next diet.

But the diets somehow almost failed.

Jane didn't care about how her mother looked, and neither did her father or Tracy, and Edna was happy with herself, but when it came to others opinions on her, Edna was insecure.

Jane sat in her chair next to her mother's iron, folding the clothes neatly, and placing them in the 'to be packaged' pile. "Your hair looks pretty down, hon." Edna told her oldest daughter as she handed her a blouse to fold. "You should keep it like that more often."

Jane was sucking on yet another peppermint. "I look like a poodle." She said as she folded the blouse, which was still warm from the iron, carefully. "But thank you."

"I hate it when you do that," Edna said as she put her iron down.

"Do what, ma?" Jane asked. She began to suck on her cheek and peppermint like she did earlier in the library, making her mother giggle a little.

"You always look down on yourself, hon, you're always saying that you're not pretty. But you are, Janie, you really are." Edna told her, before smiling. "You look like a fish when you do that."

Jane stopped sucking on her cheek and said, "I was told that before."

"You look cute when you do that." Edna handed her another piece of clothing to fold.

"You know, ma," Jane said slowly, as she began to fold the pair of pants. "I was walking by Mr. Pinky's the other day, and in the front window I saw a beautiful green dress that I thought would definitely bring out your eyes. Maybe one day this week we can walk down there and see if you want to get it. We can bring Tracy and the three of us can go out for dinner afterwards."

Edna looked at Jane, frowning. "Ooh, no hon." She said sorrowfully. "I promise we'll go out once I finish my next diet."

"Alright." Jane sighed in response as her mother took a sip from her mug of tea.

Jane bit the side of her cheek as she started to package the clothing up in the brown paper wrappings. She pushed her hair away from her face as she tied up the packages.

Secretly, she hated folding and packaging the clothes. The only good part of it was that she could spend more time with her mother, and that the detergent she used smelled amazingly wonderful.

Jane loved it when Tracy came home from school. After she watched the Corny Collin's program, Jane would sit at the kitchen table with Tracy, and she would help her with her homework and studying while Edna would cook dinner. Then, the two girls would quickly move Tracy's school supplies from the table, and sit in the living room, talking and laughing as Edna set the table for dinner.

Tracy and Jane would take turns getting their father from his shop; one night, Jane would get Wilbur, while the next night Tracy got him. It always took a few minutes to drag their father away from his shop; he would close the shop for dinner, and then he would show Jane or Tracy some of the new things he got to sell.

It was waiting for Tracy to come home all day that was excruciating for Jane, because she had nothing to do all day but work at the library and fold clothes. She did the same things everyday; she found it safer than being in school, where she was vulnerable to anything.

Jane and Tracy proved that the saying "opposites attract" was true; although they were closer than anything, the two of them were very different from each other from their looks to how they acted. While Tracy ratted her hair and tried to follow all of the new trends, Jane's hair was plain, and she wore old clothes that were out of style. While Tracy could care less about school, and danced and sung until her ankles were swollen and her face blue, music was not Jane's life, and school was.

School used to be everything for Jane, but now it's a memory.

She was afraid to go back to college, but she wanted to. She wanted to leave her house and go on for bigger and better things, but her fear of everything around her stopped her from doing so.

And it depressed her.

She continued to package clothing, tying the packages with shaking hands, stopping every once in a while to pop a peppermint in her mouth. She thought about fame. Tracy wanted to be a famous dancer, and she used to want to be a famous writer.

Tracy was trying, but Jane had given up. Jane remembered overhearing her father, mother, and Tracy talking about how Tracy wanted to try out for the Corny Collins show. She was pretending to be asleep, but she was really laying in the dark, her eyes wide open, listening to every word they were saying. She didn't know if Tracy actually went to the station, but Jane secretly hoped she did, she didn't want Tracy to stop reaching for her dreams just because of her appearance.

Tracy could dance well, and the people on the show should look past her weight and focus more on her talents than her flaws. But, Jane knew that some people were superficial, and it wasn't going to be easy for her younger sister. But all of her trying was going to be paid off one day; Tracy was just going to have to be patient.

"Janie," Edna said. "You're tying the packages too tight, hon."

Jane loosened her grip on the string. "Sorry."

She felt Edna stroke her shoulder softly, and she felt ashamed. How must her mother feel about her not going to school any longer? How did she feel that her daughter didn't tell her the details about what happened to her, just because she didn't want her to look at her any different than she already is? At first, she never thought about it, but as she watched her mother on those long days at home, Jane

realized that even if she wasn't showing it, her mother's heart must be breaking, for the life she once knew was changing swiftly. Her husband spent ungodly hours down at his store; her oldest child was slowly disintegrating into nothing while her youngest daughter is drifting away from her more and more each day.

Jane sighed, she felt bad for her big-hearted mother.

Edna stopped ironing a couple minutes later. "Let's take a break, hon.," She said as she walked into the kitchen to make herself a hot cup of tea. Jane finished wrapping up the last folded garment before going into her room.

She sat on her bed and put a peppermint in her mouth; she threw the wrapper in the waste bin by the door, which was full of wrappers. She sighed and looked around the room, and she felt empty inside.

She would be preparing for finals if she were back at school. She wouldn't be working at the library, helping her mother fold clothes, or talking to Corny Collins. She would be studying, and being a regular student. But now she was overcome by an undying fear that was controlling her and ruining her life.

And it was her fault.

It was her fault for going outside that late without anyone else. It was her fault for not running fast enough. It was her fault for not defending herself more.

All of this was her fault.

She lie down on her bed, and put her face in her pillow. She was still laying like that when Penny ran in the house, screaming for everyone to come to her. Slowly, Jane got up and went into the living room, where Penny stood, jumping up and down.

After Penny convinced Edna that what they were going to watch was completely worthwhile, she turned on the Corny Collins show. Patiently, Jane stood there, watching the role call, and there was an extra person.

And that person was Tracy.

Jane's jaw fell open as her mother, father, and Penny all shouted "Go Tracy! Go, go, go!" Jane grinned and "danced" along with her parents and Penny to the theme song of the Corny Collins show.

For once, she felt an emotion that wasn't fear.

Grinning, Jane watched her sister talk to Corny Collins on the television. Jane noticed that Tracy now had some blonde in her hair, and she looked like a star.

The four of them just ogled at the television screen, happy and amazed that Tracy had made it onto the Corny Collins show. But, after a few minutes, Penny had to leave, or else she would be in serious trouble with her mother, which left Jane and her parents sitting in the living room.

When the living room door opened, and Tracy walked in, Jane, Edna,

and Wilbur clapped. Jane got off of the couch and put her arm around her sister's shoulder. "Trace, what do you think about getting a milkshake with me after dinner?" She asked. "The two of us can celebrate this joyous occasion."

Tracy beamed. "Sure!" She exclaimed.

And so, after they ate dinner, Tracy and Jane decided to walk to Phil's diner, which had the best chocolate milkshakes in Baltimore. The two sisters smiled and chatted while they walked, and once they got there the two of them sat at the counter, and ordered their chocolate milkshakes.

After they drank their beverages, Jane and Tracy walked back home. Well, Tracy sort of danced home, while Jane walked behind her. While they had their milkshakes all they talked about was the Corny Collins show, and while they were sitting there, a few girls had even asked Tracy for her autograph, which really made Tracy excited.

When they walked in their house, both girls told their parents goodnight before getting into their pajamas and going to bed.

But that night, Jane didn't sleep.

5. A Fearful Incident

Before I begin this chapter, I would like to thank smallncrazy91 with everything I have in me, because she gave me a suggestion for this chapter, which inspired me to write this chapter. If it weren't for them, this chapter would not have been posted for a long time.) Thank you for the suggestion and inspiration, smallncrazy91!!!

Also, I am so sorry for the fact that I have not updated in forever. It's just that school and everything was really beginning to pileup. But hopefully, there will be quicker updates.

Yeah, it's short, I know. I'm sorry (

The silence in her father's shop was enough to make her drowsiness worse, and the stillness made it seem as though time had frozen. The nothingness that surrounded her made her heart beat faster, and it scared her ever so slightly.

Finally, Wilbur Turnblad decided that he needed to rest after working unusually long hours, and, since he thought it would be a sin if he closed the store early, he left his oldest daughter in charge until it was time for the store to close. However, she found this stupid, since she had been sitting at the register for an hour and a half, and no one has yet to come, and she doubted that any one will come in another hour and a half.

Her elbow rested on the counter, and her long fingers twirled strands of her frizzy hair as her eyes gazed at the old pages of a copy of Wuthering Heights. To her surprised, the bell attached to the door rang, making her jump and lose her page.

At first, there was nothing but silence, but only a few minutes later, she heard footsteps echoing in the otherwise silent room. Anxiously, she looked down at her book, trying to find which page she

was on, when she felt someone's rough, cold hand touch her wrist. She jumped, a small noise emitted from her throat.

"May I help you?" She asked in a small tone of voice, not looking up to see who's hand was upon her wrist.

She heard nothing, but a man's laugh. Her heart began to pump harder and harder as she kept her eyes firmly on her book. "Do you need help with anything, sir?" She asked, moving her arm, hoping that this stranger would let go of her.

She felt the man lean closer, and she tried to move further away, but his grasp on her wrist was firmer. "You must be really lonely in here, huh?" He asked in a husky voice. She looked up at him quickly, only to turn her face away.

"I'm f-fine, actually." She replied.

"I bet that if you had more company, you'd be prettier. What's your name, little girl?"

A sudden wave of coldness overcome her, and she shivered, and without speaking, she responded: "J-Jane. My name's Jane."

He laughed. "Plain Jane, Plain Jane. I bet I can make you prettier, my Plain Jane."

"You are hurting my wrist, get off." She said, her eyes burning with tears that refused to shed. The metallic taste that was oh so similar was coming back, and slowly, with her free hand, she began to grab a peppermint.

It was hard to unwrap the peppermint with one hand, so she quickly shoved it in her mouth, and started to unwrap it with her tongue. Fearfully, she shook, it was taking her too long to open the peppermint, and she felt more anxious before.

She looked at him, and he just smiled at her. She saw his other hand rising up, and she feared that he would slap it out of her mouth. But, he didn't. He did something far worse.

He had grabbed her breast. She wanted to scream in fear and desperation, but nothing would come out. Instead, small noises and a small bit of saliva came from her mouth as she tried to fight him off. The tears that had once refused to fall were now pouring down her cheeks as she tried to get his hands off her.

In the middle of her fight to be free of this stranger, the bell attached to the door rang again, and this time, she screamed. The peppermint, in a slimy mess, fell out of her mouth and her breathing became heavy. Through the man's neck, she saw Corny Collin's brilliant grin turn into a frown.

Forcefully, she felt the man let go of her wrist and breast, in a fiery rage she saw Corny on the verge of hitting him. His hand shaking, he took his hands off of the man, and in a stern, shaking voice he said: "Leave, now, before I do something that'll make you wish you were dead."

Hurriedly, the man left, and slowly, Corny turned his head to look at

her, who was sobbing quietly, her head hanging low. "Ba-" He started before he stopped himself. "Jane?"

She didn't answer him. She pushed the wet peppermint onto the floor, and sat down on the stool that her father sat on all day. She felt his warm hand on her shoulder, and with two of his fingers, he lifted her chin up. With a small smile, he told her softly, "He won't hurt you again. Do you want to go get a drink or something to eat, maybe that'll calm you down a little."

She shook her head, the loose hair that was falling out of her ponytail was following her head. "No." She said thickly. "I can't."

"How about a walk, some fresh air would do you good, Jane." He said softly as he took a hankerchief out of his pocket. "Here."

She wiped her eyes although more tears were slowly falling down her cheeks. "I have to close up." She told him. "My mother wanted me to help her with dinner."

Corny revealed his bright teeth to her. "Well, maybe I'll talk to you another time. Goodbye."

She didn't answer his farewell, and instead, she waited for him to leave so she could lock the door behind him.

Then, she rushed into her room, and cried silently into her pillow.

6. A Confused Look

By the time it was seven o'clock, Jane lie in her bed, face down in her pillow. The tears that had stopped falling hours ago were dried and made her face feel funny. She took slow, long breaths and pretended she was somewhere else, by her self.

It wasn't like that night at all. She thought to herself as she shifted a little bit. _What he did and what the other man did are different things. He probably would've stopped if I screamed loud enough._

In the middle of her thoughts, there was a knock on her door. She said nothing, thinking that maybe whoever it was would go away. But, a few seconds after knocking, Tracy stuck her head through the door. "Jane, are you alright?" She asked as she came in, fixing the straps of her backpack. "I mean, you rushed up from the store really fast last night, and you didn't tell us why you didn't eat dinner."

"I'm fine, Trace," Came her muffled response. "You're going to miss the bus if you take any longer."

"I still have time," Tracy responded. "I just want to know what happened last night. You didn't seem yourself, and Ma was worried."

"I wasn't hungry, Trace, that's it. Nothing is wrong with me, I swear. I think I might be getting the flu, and that's all." Jane lied. "Go and get your education."

"Alright," Tracy said slowly. "I'll see you after school. I hope you feel better."

"Thanks, Trace." Jane said as she heard her sister shut the door and go down the steps.

Jane pushed her face further into her pillow, inhaling the deep scent of fabric softener. She exhaled just as her mother opened the door, silently, she sighed.

"Jane," Edna Turnblad said as she lightly tapped her oldest daughter's shoulder. "Janie, are you feeling alright, hon?"

"Yes, mother." She replied softly.

"Why didn't you eat your dinner last night? Why, just before you went down to the shop you said you were excited about dinner." Edna said sounding very concerned.

"I'm fine, I just felt funny when I was in the store, so I went to bed. It completely blew my mind to tell you, ma, and I'm sorry that I worried you. I'm feeling great now, though." Jane replied.

"Well, I'm very glad you're feeling better, hon. You worried the stars out of me, you know?" Edna asked as Jane turned to her back and sat up, nodding her head slightly. "Would you like me to make you some breakfast?"

"No, I'm fine, ma." Jane responded. "I think I'm just going to walk around a little bit."

"Are you sure you don't want something to eat? You might get fatigued and faint while you're walking." Edna protested.

"I'm sure, if I get on the verge of fainting, I'll hurry and buy myself something to eat." She responded.

Edna frowned, and Jane could tell that her mother didn't want her to go out without eating something, but when she saw her mother sigh, she couldn't help but smile a little. "Have a good time." She said softly.

"When I come back, I'll help you fold clothes." Jane said as her mother smiled and left the room.

As soon as her mother was gone, she made her bed, and got dressed. As she walked out of her bedroom, she shoved a handful of peppermints in her pocket, and put one in her mouth. "Bye ma." She said as she walked out of the house and into the bright morning.

There was something about being outside that really made her feel content and at ease. Although there were many people, she knew that they were paying more attention to what was around them than her. I mean, who would pay attention to a homely girl with no sense of style, anyway?

She used to be terrified of being out here, but now, noticing that being one in so many people was a good thing; it was being in the dark alone that was bad.

As she passed by a dress store, Jane slowly retraced her steps and looked at the window in front of her. Before her, behind the glass shield, there were three dresses on mannequins. One was long sleeved and blue, the other one was poofy and green, and the other one was plain and yellow. She always looked good in green, and she loved the color yellow. But, she would never look good in them. An ugly girl who had no confidence in herself would not look good in pretty dresses like those.

Sighing, she walked away. It was a nice, cool day, and the sky was that shade of blue that was so beautiful it looked surreal. Walking in weather like this made a rush of energy swim through her veins. She felt like she had before, a young, carefree student who didn't have the horrific events from the past scare her to death.

And, honestly, she loved it. When she was here, by her self, with no one paying attention to her as she browsed in the stores or walked down the somewhat crowded sidewalks, she was herself again and was thinking those carefree thoughts Tracy must be thinking all the time.

Everything was fine until she heard him.

"Jane!?" He called from behind her. At first, she ignored him and slowly began to walk away, but as he got closer and touched her shoulders, she began to shake, and knew that she couldn't get away.

"Hey Jane," He smiled breathlessly. "I've been looking everywhere for you. I went to the library, I some stores, and then I finally went to the shop, and when your dad just saw me standing there, looking around, he asked me what I was looking for and I said 'Jane' and so he went and got your mother, because he didn't know where you went, and I told her-"

"Wait, you went to my _house_?" Jane asked, turning around to look at him. Slowly, she took one step back. "Why?"

"I wanted to see if you were alright," Corny replied. "Last night was rough."

Before he gave her any time to answer him, he looked at her and asked: "Jane, are you alright? You're shaking."

The taste slowly was coming back in her mouth, and with her shaking hands she took a peppermint and slowly unwrapped it and put it in her mouth. "Jane?" He asked, placing a hand on her shoulder. "Jane, what's wrong?"

"Don't touch me." She said, her voice shaking. "I don't like being touched."

As soon as she said that, he removed his hand from her shoulder, and she took a few steps away from him. "Jane, just calm down and tell me what's wrong." Corny said. "I'm not going to hurt you or anything, I want to help you. Do you feel sick? Do you need to sit down, or get some water?"

"I need to go home," She said slowly as she walked past him, wrapping

her arms around herself. She looked back once to see him, standing still, looking confused. As she approached her block, she walked faster, and entered through her father's store, where she saw him conversing with a customer.

"Janie," He said, looking away from the customer, and at her. "That Crownly Collins was here looking for you, do you even know him?"

She ignored her father's questions, and ran up the stairs that led to their home, and slammed open the door. When she walked in the house, she saw her mother ironing clothes, but as her oldest daughter came in, she slammed down the iron and looked behind her shoulder. "Janie, what's the matter with you? You scared me half to death."

Jane said nothing. Her eyes were wide and her heart beating, and somehow, in the back of her mind there was the image of Corny, standing in the middle of the sidewalk, confused. "I'm sorry, ma." She whispered as she sat down next to her mother's iron, and started to fold clothes.

7. A Visit to the Studio

Jane was in the middle of folding a brown sweater when her father opened the door, and said, "Janie, come down with me for a minute." Gently, she placed the sweater on the floor, and followed her father to his shop. While he made sure nothing was out of place in the aisles, Jane sat at the front counter, and silently played with the buttons on the cash register.

"Do you like that man who was asking for you today?" He asked her as customers entered the store.

"What? Daddy, honestly, I don't even know who he is. All I know is that he is Corny Collins, the host of the show that Tracy is on. I saw him come by the library once, but I never talked to him." Jane replied, not looking away from the cash register.

"I think that he'd be good for you, petunia." Wilbur told her as she looked up at him. When she did, she saw that he was wearing a clown's attire.

"Daddy, why do you think that?"

"I think that he would make you smile." He replied, and sighed. "I miss your smile so much. I miss you being happy."

She was going to say 'I am happy, daddy.' But she knew that if she said that, he would know that she was lying, which would make the whole lie useless. "I miss being happy too," She said very quietly. "But what makes you think he would make me happy?"

"I know you've seen him on television," Wilbur said. "his charisma and happiness is hard to ignore, and by knowing him, maybe his happiness would rub off on you. I think that if you give him a chance, you'll be happy."

Jane didn't say anything. Honestly, she did not know what to say. "Just be kind to him the next time you see him, little girl."

She nodded as she slid off of the stool at the counter and slowly made her way upstairs, and sat down next to her mother, and continued to fold clothing.

"What did your father want, hon?" Edna asked her.

"Oh, he just wanted me to help him with the register," Jane lied. "It froze again."

"Did he tell you that a young man came asking for you today?" Her mother replied. "He looked like that Cranky Cornersâ€¦"

"Corny Collins?" Jane asked. "Oh yeah, dad told me he came. He actually found me when I was walking. You see, he left a book he checked out at the library, and he was wondering if I could give it to Tracy so she could give it to him."

"Why don't you just go down there yourself, hon?"

"What?" Jane asked.

"Well, why don't you just give it to him today? You can come by before the show is over, and you and Tracy could walk home together after the show is over." Edna smiled. "I think you two need to bond more."

"Must I go?" Jane asked. "I mean, I could just give it to Tracy and she could give it to him tomorrow."

"I think you should go and give it to him yourself," Edna said. "and then you and Tracy can go get something to drink or something. You two will have fun."

"I'll only do it so I can spend time with Tracy." Jane said, reprimanding herself for lying to her mother. "But I think you should come with me, so you could see where Tracy dances every day. I think it would be fun, don't you?"

"Oh, no. I can't, Janie. The neighbors haven't seen me in years, and plus, I have all this ironin' to doâ€¦" Edna replied nervously as Jane frowned.

"Alright, ma." She sighed as she finished folding the last item of clothing her mother ironed.

Jane sighed as she reluctantly left the library with a copy of Gone With the Wind underneath her arm. It was about four o'clock and she was making her way to the studio so she could go and wait for Tracy. Honestly, she didn't want to, but if her mother found out that she didn't go to meet Tracy, she knew that her mother would be disappointed.

I took her about fifteen minutes to get to the studio, and when she walked through the doors, she was greeted by a security guard. "What do you need, little lady?" He asked her.

"My sister is a part of the Corny Collin's show, and my mother wanted me to wait her for her. Also, I have a book for Corny, he left it at the library when he was there." She said calmly as he smiled and let her through to the show, where the first thing she saw was people

dancing, and the first thing she heard was people singing.

She stood there, looking at the floor as the people dance and sung in front of her, trying not to pay attention to them. But, it was hard to ignore the large thud that came from right in front of her. Slowly, she looked up, and saw Corny on the ground, laughing embarrassedly as he managed to get his way up. As soon as he was up he began singing again, and slowly, the dancing continued.

When the show was over, both Tracy and Corny approached her. Confused, Corny looked at Tracy, who was grinning with excitement. "Corny," She said in that sweet voice of her. "This is my older sister, Jane."

"Why I didn't know that Tracy here was your sister, Baby Jane." He grinned as he looked at the book that was in her hand. "What's that."

Jane froze. "This is the book that you left at the library the other day, remember?" She said sternly. "You know, the one you asked me to bring back to you this morning?"

Corny finally caught on. "Oh! Yeah, that book!" He exclaimed. "Why don't you come into my dressing room so I can give you the one that I had meant to return, but forgot."

Before she could answer, he quickly added: "The only thing I change is my shoes, and this will take only a few minutes. I'm sure Tracy could wait."

"Yeah," Tracy smiled. "I have to get ready, anyway."

"Alright," Jane sighed. "I'll come." And after she said that, they were making their way to his dressing room. It wasn't hard to find at all, since there was a large plaque on the door that said: "CORNY COLLINS" in big, bold, gold letters. He opened the door, and Jane swore she never saw anything that was as unorganized in her life.

"I finished The Catcher in the Rye." He told her proudly as he picked up the book from his dressing area. "I thought it was really good, actually. What's that book."

"Gone with the Wind, it's my favorite book." She said as she handed it to him. "I own this, so there's no deadline. The librarian gave it to me a couple years ago, and since it still has the library stuff on it, I decided to give it to you, so I didn't have to check out a different book."

"Thanks," He said as he took the large book. "It might take me a while, but don't worry, Baby Jane, I'll read it."

"Good." Jane said as she turned to leave.

"Wait." Corny said, and she turned again.

"Yes?"

"What happened this morning?" He asked. "I mean, did I do anything?"

"No, you didn't." She said slowly. "Iâ€|" She paused, and decided that she wasn't going to lie to him. "It's a long, complicated story that I really can't explain right now."

"Well maybe one day you can explain it to me," He said. "I mean, maybe one day we can go and get a milkshake or something. Not as a date, though. Maybe it could be a friendly outingâ€|"

"I like the sound of a friendly outing," She said, and suddenly, she realized that she was speaking before thinking. But the weird thing was, she was not as afraid as before. But the fact that she was not afraid scared her ever so slightly. "I-I have to go find Tracy, I was supposed to go do something with her. My mother is striving to get us to bond together, because apparently, we do not know each other as much as we should."

Corny laughed. "Nice," He said. "Well, I'll see you around, Baby Jane."

"Goodbye." Jane said as she left, and as she left the dressing room, she saw Tracy, who was grinning.

As they walked out of the studio, Tracy said: "I didn't know you knew Corny! Well, do you like him?"

8. A Bouquet of Orange Flowers

"I don't know. I guess." Jane replied swiftly as she and her sister walked down the sidewalk. Before they left the station, the two of them had used a payphone to ask their mother if they could go out to dinner, so they could bond, and since they mentioned the whole 'sister's bonding with one another and getting to know each other more even though they probably knew everything about one another already' made their mother ecstatic, and they were able to stay out until eight.

"He's really nice once you get to know him." Tracy said. "I mean he is one of the most sincere men on the face of this planet."

"That's nice." Jane said as the two of them entered a restaurant, and sat down in a booth, where a waiter presented them with two menus.

"What's wrong?" Tracy asked. "You're acting strange."

"I'm an idiot, that's what's wrong. I'm a big idiot who should just turn into an ostrich and dig a hole in the sand so I could bury my head in it, and hopefully suffocate." Jane replied.

"You honestly can't be that much of an idiot."

"I am," Jane frowned. "I agreed to go on a "friendly outing" with Corny."

"A friendly outing?" Tracy asked.

"Yes, and please, do not ask me why I agreed to do it." Jane said as she skimmed through the menu slowly.

"It's not that bad, Jane," Tracy replied. "I mean I just got finished telling you that Corny is one of the nicest people on the face of this earth. I bet you'll have fun."

"Yeah, right."

They were quiet for a little while, and Jane had her eyes stuck on her menu, although she was not paying attention to any of the words on the pamphlet. She looked up at her sister, who was looking through her own menu, and realized that without Tracy, she had no one to tell her secrets to.

When they were children they used to have their own secret codes, plans that either failed or were forgotten, and she remembered that when they were older, they would move their beds, so it looked like they were lying on a full-sized bed, and would talk and giggle all night long.

She remembered that after her rape, she barely talked to her family, but then one day, her and Tracy talked like they used to. Tracy would sit on the foot of her sister's bed, and they would talk, mostly about school and life, and her rape was rarely brought up. But when it was, Jane told Tracy things that she never told anyone else. And although Tracy was young, Jane knew that the only person she could truly confide in was her younger sister.

"I think I might just get a cheeseburger." Jane said as she closed her menu, Tracy looked up and said: "I was just about to say that."

"I think that in another life, we were twins, Trace." Jane said as their waitress came up and asked them for their orders. Before Tracy replied to her sister, she ordered her cheeseburger and water, and Jane did the same. As their server walked away, Tracy giggled and said:

"I think we were. So where are you and Corny going to for this 'friendly outing'?"

"I have no clue. He just said friendly outing, and I said okay, and then he said 'bye Baby Jane,' and I said 'goodbye' and left." Jane said quickly. "Hopefully I can get out of this."

"Why would you want to get out of it?" Tracy asked. "I think you guys will have fun."

Jane groaned. "But then he would want to keep on going out on these friendly outings, and they'll never end."

Tracy laughed. "I don't think that would happen." And then she said: "I think that the two of you are going to have an amazing time, and then go on a date, and then after that go on many dates, and then he'll propose, and you'll get married, and have kids, and the two of you will live until you're one hundred and two, and then you'll die."

Jane laughed, and looked at her sister with a confused look upon her face. "Why a hundred and two?" She asked. "And, honestly, I do not believe that will happen at all. He's tooâ€¦"

"Perfect?" Tracy asked, as Jane scrunched her nose. "What? I mean he has a voice that is as smooth as butter, a million-dollar smile, and not only that, but he is so sweet, sincere, and happy. I think you need him, Jane-"

"Okay, dad." Jane said in a mocking sort of voice.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Tracy asked her sister as the waitress came back with their food.

As the waitress left, Jane looked at her and said: "Dad gave me this whole conversation this morning; he kept going on about how his charisma and happiness would bring my oh-so missed smile back upon my face, and that I should give him a chance, because who knows, I might want to be with him every minute because he just makes me so happy."

Tracy laughed as she took a bite of her cheeseburger. "Why would daddy talk about Corny? He doesn't even know who he is."

"Corny came to the shop today to see where I was, because he wanted to know if I was alright." Jane said, and mentally kicked herself because now Tracy would ask why there was such a dire need for him to know if she was all right.

Tracy looked at her sister, astounded. "He actually came to our house, to ask for you?" She asked as a grin slowly made her way onto her face, but she paused, and asked: "Why did he want to know if you were alright?"

"Some guy was being a jerk at the shop last night," She lied. "You know, stupid sex jokes and poor attempts to get at me. Corny came for some odd reason, and took care of it. It's no big deal, though, I mean, I could've handled the whole thing myself." She paused and laughed. "The man was such an idiot, and was probably drunk; I bet that if I pushed his forehead with my index finger, he would've fell."

Tracy laughed. "So just in your time of need, the super Corny Collins came to your rescue?"

Jane smirked. "If you could say that, he just told the man to leave, which he did."

For a little while, they talked about Corny Collins, but the conversation was quickly directed towards Link Larkin, the boy who Tracy had a crush on. After they had finished eating, and had paid for their food, the two girls walked home, and continued to talk, until it was time for Tracy to go to bed (which meant that Jane went to bed, too).

The next morning, Jane woke up, and walked into the kitchen, where she saw her mother sitting at the table that had a vase of orange flowers on it. Jane mustered up the biggest smile she could and looked at her mother. "Did daddy surprise you with those, ma?" She asked as she sat across from her mother.

Edna shook her head. "No, hon. They're for you."

"What?" Jane asked, surprised. "Who are they from?"

"I don't know," Edna replied. "There's a note attached to it, but I thought that you wanted to see it first."

Jane took the note off of the bouquet, and opened it, and as she saw what was in it, she rolled her eyes. The note said:

Baby Jane,

Don't think I lying about our 'friendly outing'. I thought I would tell you so by sending you this and I was thinking we go to Sal's pub for drinks on Saturday night, say about six?

If there is anything wrong with that proposition, call me:

825-6752.

Corny.

PS: I hope you're not allergic to flowers.

"This is a waste of money," She said to herself, shaking her head.

"Who are they from, Janie?" Edna smiled, curiosity dripped off of her pleasant voice.

"Corny Collins," Jane said as she sat down on the couch, and dialed his number.

"Hellowwhoisthis?" Was the first thing she heard.

"Hello?"

"Jane?" He asked.

"â€|Yes."

"So did you get the flowers?" He asked.

"No, I just guessed your number on a whim."

"So what do you think about the Pub, Saturday at six?"

"I do not drink."

"They have non alcoholic drinks there. "

"Fine, I guess." She replied. "I'll meet you there."

She mentally kicked herself over and over again. She had a chance to tell him no, that Saturday was not good, and then avoid seeing him for the rest of her life, but instead she told him that she'd go.

She felt very stupid.

"I'll come and get you." He said.

"No, you won't. I'll meet you there."

"You know where it is?" Corny asked.

"No, but I'll get there."

"I'll come and get you at your house, Jane." She could tell by the tone of his voice that he was grinning. "There's no ifs ands or buts about it."

"Fine. Goodbye." And with that, she hung up, and then sprawled out on the couch.

"Ma, I need your help." She said as her mother walked in and put the vase of flowers on the coffee table.

"With what, hon?" Her mother asked, and Jane knew that she was eager to help her daughter.

"I need you to give me a disease that will make me immobile in the next forty eight hours." Jane replied as she turned onto her stomach and hid her face into the arm of the couch.

"Janie, what is wrong with you?" Edna asked.

"I am going on a 'friendly outing' with Corny Collins, although I would rather not. I have this horrible habit of speaking before I think, and now I'm going to be stuck going on 'friendly outings' with this man for the rest of my life because he seems to be such a persistent and pushy man. And, honestly, who can say no to that smile and those eyes?" Was Jane's muffled response.

"I don't understand what's so bad about that, Janie," Edna smiled. "You always had such an imagination, I bet you and this boy will have a lot of fun."

"You and Tracy must have the same brain, because what you have just said to me is very similar to what Tracy told me last night." Jane replied as she sat up and pushed her hair out of her eyes.

"So when are the two of you going on your date?" Edna asked as she turned her iron on.

"First of all, ma, it is not a date. It is a friendly outing," Jane said stubbornly. "and he's coming here at six."

Edna smiled. "You and Tracy should go buy a dress, and you could straighten your hair, or, you can borrow our neighbor's curling iron and have those pretty, tight curlsâ€¦ you know, how you did your hair for your high school graduation? Oh, I'll think we'll have so much fun getting you ready for your date."

"It isn't a date, and the only thing I'm doing is making my hair not look like a lion's mane," Jane replied. "I don't think I need to get too decked out for this."

Edna rolled her eyes and looked at her daughter as she began ironing a short skirt. "Come here and help me with the clothes, and tell me about this boy of yours."

Jane slid off of the couch, and sat next to her mother. Like her mother wanted, Jane began to tell her about Corny Collins (well, what she knew about him, which was that he sung, danced, and had a great smile.) while Edna ironed, smiling.

9. A Friendly Outing

Authors Note: There is no other way for me to start this, except by saying that I apologize. It has been over a year since I've updated this story, and I'm just so glad to see that there are still people reading it. This year has been one of the most stressful years of my life, but as the summer comes closer and closer, I find that stress being alleviated more and more. I'm going to update this more, and I dedicate it to everyone who is still reading and reviewing this.

And, with this said, I give you Chapter Nine of A Story About Life.

* * *

><p>Corny came while Tracy was straightening her hair with their mother's iron. Her somewhat long hair was spread out on the ironing board, and she was trying her best not to flinch as Tracy got closer to her scalp. "Don't burn my head," Jane kept saying, and Tracy giggled. "What, you don't trust me?" She asked. "I think I'm just going to lay this iron on your head."<p>

"Well isn't this a pretty picture," Corny said as he entered the living room. She moved her focus towards him, and he was looking at her with that big grin plastered onto his face. He didn't look like the Corny Collins she had seen at the library and on TV. He was wearing dark washed jeans, and a plaid button-down shirt. Tracy laughed, and the tip of the iron hit her head. She jolted up, her partially straight hair falling behind her back as she rubbed her scalp. "Ow," She said, wincing. She was wearing an orange dress and brown Mary-Jane's, and since she was sitting in such an awkward position for such a long time, there was quite a large crease at the back of her dress. Slowly, she put one of her hands on the crease, and pitifully tried to smooth it out.

"You look excited," He teased. "And your dress matches my flowers." His smile grew as he pointed to the vase of blooming flowers that were sitting on the living room table. "I bet you planned that."

"She would plan something like that." Tracey giggled, and her father laughed along. Her mother had retired to her room after ironing for a few hours; she didn't say it, but Jane knew that she felt insecure about being seen by 'Crabby Conklin' as Edna had called him.

"Let's go," Jane said as she grabbed the small purse that Tracey had let her borrowed, and started to walk towards the door. "Bye Trace, by dad."

Corny followed her, after saying: "Good evening Mr. Turnblad, Tracey." Her father waved to the two of them and said, "Good bye Janie, have fun on your date!"

She turned red, and closed the door behind Corny, nearly hitting him with it. "So you've never been to Sal's Pub before?" He asked her as they walked down the stairs, and he directed her towards his car, and not only opened the door for her, but closed it after she had gotten her seatbelt on. She shook her head. "I never heard of it." She replied.

"Not many people have," He replied as he put the key in the ignition. "I think you'll like it, though."

She didn't reply. "I really like that book you let me borrow. To be honest, I didn't think I was going to like it, but I was proven wrong." He said.

She smiled a little, and she honestly believed that it was the first time that she smiled that night. "If you didn't like it, I would be incredibly insulted. I would also be insulted if you were lying to me right now."

They stopped at a red light, and he laughed. "I would never lie to you, Baby Jane."

She shook her head as the car started moving again. "Everybody lies."

"You're a very optimistic person." Corny said sarcastically as he chuckled. He parallel parked in front of an old brick building, and turned the car off. "Here we are." He said as he took off his seatbelt, and opened his door. She removed her seatbelt, and after closing her door, she smoothed out the back of her dress. She stepped up onto the curb, and Corny held the door open for her.

Inside the pub the lights were dimmed, and the faint smell of cigarette smoke hung in the air. However, there were only about four customers there, and their low voices could be heard over the music that was playing. Corny led her to the bar, and they both took seats on the black leather stools. Her hands remained cupped together on her lap, while Corny sat casually, playing with one of the straws that he found in a dispenser next to him.

"They have really good chicken here." Corny informed her as he stuck the straw in his mouth.

"Hello Corny," A husky voice said from behind the bar. Jane looked up from her lap and at the bar tender. His face was tan, and his whiskers were on the verge of being a full-grown beard. She assumed that Corny frequently went here, because this man did not seem to be the type to watch the Corny Collins show, and because Corny seemed so comfortable here.

She couldn't help but to cringe when she saw the man, for she remembered the way that her rapist's whiskers felt on her cheek that night in June. She knew that this man here at Sal's was not the person who did that to her, but she couldn't help but feel anxious. "Hey Sal," Corny grinned as Jane forcefully opened her clutch so she could get one of her peppermints. But, there were no peppermints in there. Actually, there was nothing but lint and a few dollars in there. She mentally kicked herself for forgetting to put the necessary items in her bag, as she tried not to panic. "This is my friend Jane."

"Hello," Jane said softly as she closed her purse and put it down on the bar with shaking hands. Sal a menu in front of her, and with shaking hands, she opened it. "I'll have the usual, Sal." Corny said, and that was when Jane noticed that there wasn't a menu in front of him.

"I'll have the chicken," Jane said, not even looking at the menu. "And a glass of water, please."

"Good choice," Corny said as she handed her menu to Sal. "I get the chicken every time."

She looked in her clutch once again, moving the money to the side to see if her peppermints were underneath it, but there was nothing else. She had never forgotten her peppermints before, and she didn't know how she would do without them.

"How was your day, Baby Jane?" Corny asked, still chewing on his straw.

"Good," She replied softly. "How was yours?"

"Just dandy." He grinned, the straw sticking out of his teeth. Sal came with water for her and a drink for Corny.

"Here you go, pretty lady." Sal said as he put the water in front of her. She felt like her heart stopped beating.

"_You're a pretty girl, Jane."_

"Excuse me," She said as she got off of her stool quickly. "Where is the restroom?"

"To the left," Corny said, pointing his finger in the direction. "Is everything alright, Jane?"

"I'm fine," She said, swallowing as she rushed to the bathroom. To her relief, it was a single person's bathroom, so she could have privacy. She locked the door behind her, and sat down on the floor, her head in her hands. When she looked up, she saw that on a little table, there were a bowl of peppermints. She sighed a sigh of relief, and stuck her hand in the bowl, unwrapping one of the mints and putting it in her mouth. She washed her face and took another one of the peppermints, before exiting the restroom. She slowly walked back to the bar, where two plates of chicken were set. It seemed like Corny had waited for her, because he had yet to start on his chicken.

When he saw her slide into her seat, and take a sip of water, he immediately asked if she was alright. "Do you feel sick?" He asked her. "I can just pay up now and take you home if you'd like."

She shook her head, although this was the prime opportunity for her to get out of this, like she had wanted just the day before. "I'm fine; I just had to do something." She replied as she started to eat her chicken. "You're right," she said, smiling at him. "The chicken is good."

"There are two things that I'm always right about, Baby Jane," He

grinned as he put a piece of chicken in his mouth. "And that's good music and good food."

"I don't doubt you." She replied and he chuckled.

"I think that's a first." He pointed out.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You didn't seem too happy by coming tonight." He said, and at that point, she felt horrible for the way she was acting these past few days.

"That's not true." She said slowly. "I was excited for tonight."

He smirked. "You didn't seem so excited when I came tonight, and yesterday on the phone you seemed aggravated."

She blushed a little. "Tracey burnt my head today, and yesterday just was horrible in general." She didn't want to seem as though she was covering up her feelings too much, so she tried to be as brief as possible. "But I was excited for tonight."

"Well I'm glad, Baby Jane." Corny said as he took a sip of his drink. "I didn't want you to feel like you were forced to come. You could've said no."

"I would've said no if I didn't want to come." She pointed out. "But I didn't say no."

She felt horrible for lying to him, but she would feel even worse if it was found out that she actually didn't want to come. However, as the night went on, Jane realized that it wasn't going to be as bad as she thought it was going to be. "You didn't say no." He repeated.

"So are you like the head librarian?" He asked, laughing a little. She looked at him, trying to refrain from giggling.

"The head librarian is about seventy years old, and her picture is in the library. It's nice to see that you got me confused with her." She said. "I just volunteer there."

Corny was laughing pretty hard. "Do you want to be the head librarian one day?" She could tell that he was joking.

"Oh yes," She said. "It has been my life long dream to be the head of the library that people rarely go to, just so I could have my picture plastered on the wall for those approximately four people to come in and see."

Corny laughed as he finished his dinner. "Now speaking seriously, what did you want to be when you were little?"

"I wanted to be an English teacher," She replied slowly as she took another sip of her water. As she talked, she remembered college, and how she used to love it. Sometimes, she wanted to go back, she wanted to go back to her old dorm mate, and her teachers. However, the fear of what happened that night kept her from going. She looked towards Corny, who had put another straw in his mouth. "Did you always want

to have the Corny Collin's show?" She asked him.

"I always loved music and dancing," He said as he took the straw out of his mouth, and began spinning it in between his pointer finger and thumb. "But my family thought it was absurd. I was the fourth out of eight children, and my older siblings all became doctors, like my parents, and my younger siblings all had high hopes of becoming doctors. I was out of the loop; I mustered up the grades to get into a good college, and I tried to become a doctor, but I guess the music inside me consumed me, and I left. It was actually a fluke that I was discovered," He paused to chuckle. "I was talking to one of my friends about this new dance move I made, and then demonstrated it, when the manager of the station saw me. Then the Corny Collins show was born."

"I can't picture you being a doctor at all," Jane said. "Especially after watching your show."

"If I were a doctor, I would die." Corny said bluntly. "I hate blood and needles and all of that jazz. It's gross."

"But didn't you have to practice on cadavers while you were in school, to practice for surgery?"

"I only had to once, and I paid someone else to do it for me." Corny laughed. "You just can't get enough of books, can't you?" He added.

"What do you mean?" Jane asked.

"You said you wanted to be an English teacher." He said. "And, you work at a library. You also said 'want' in the past tense, which means you changed your mind."

"I didn't change my mind." She replied. "It's just placed on a halt right now."

"Why?"

"Some things came up." She said bluntly. "I just have to reorganize my priorities right now, and I needed a break."

"I see," Corny said. "Well, now that we're done eating, how about I take you to dessert?"

She looked down at her plate, then up at the clock that was hanging on the wall, to see that it was nearly eight thirty. "I should be going home." She said, biting the corner of her lower lip.

"Alright," Corny said, as he placed money down on the bar. She grabbed her clutch and started to take her money out, but he stopped her. "I got it." He said.

"No, it's alright," She said. "I have the money."

"Rule one of our friendly outings," He said, grinning. "I pay for dinner."

"Only if I pay for dessert." She chimed in; initiating that there

would be more friendly outings in the future.

"Unless we go right for dessert, if there is no dinner involved I pay for dessert." He retaliated.

"Only if I get to drive." She replied.

"You know how to drive?" He asked her.

"Sort of. I mean, I've seen my dad drive all the time, so it can't be that hard." She said.

"Maybe next time I'll teach you how to drive," Corny said as they both got in the car. "_Then_ you can drive us to our destination."

"Alright." She said as he started driving.

When they got to her house, Corny got out of his car and walked her to the door. As she put her hand on the door knob, he patted her shoulder. "I had a great time," He grinned. "Thank you Baby Jane."

"I enjoyed myself as well," She replied. "And thank you."

He didn't leave until she was in the house, and once she walked into the living room, she found her mother and sister sitting on the couch, and her father in the kitchen. "How was it?!" Tracy exclaimed as she jumped up from the couch, with a big smile on her face. "I want you to tell me everything that happened!"

10. A Second Chance

A/N: Nowadays, I seem somewhat obliged to always start off my chapters with an apology; my procrastination on this story has been out of hand, but I am determined to finish this, I must finish this :). I really need to thank all of my reviewers, especially the latter ones, because getting those e-mails telling me about the reviews, favorites, and alerts certainly made my day and urged me even more to continue.

* * *

><p>"Wouldn't it just be groovy if you and Corny got married?" Tracy asked the next day over breakfast, making Jane bite her tongue. After taking a gulp of water, she looked at her younger sister with wide eyes and asked: "Where did that come from?"<p>

"He's going to _teach you how to drive_, Jane! That's pretty much being engaged." Jane rolled her eyes. Ever since she had gotten home from her "friendly outing" the night before, it was all that Tracy could talk about. Corny this, Jane that, Corny and Jane this. It was driving her slightly insane. "It would be really cute if you came by the studio after the show today."

She pretended like she didn't hear her sister's last remark, and silently fiddled with the scrambled eggs that were on her plate. "I'm sure he would love that!" Tracy added quickly before taking one last bite of her breakfast. "Well, I gotta go! Maybe I'll see you at the

studio!"

She looked at her eggs, and decided that she couldn't eat them anymore. She tossed the remains of her plate into the trash, and cleaned hers and Tracy's plates. Once she came into the living room, she sat down next to her mother and started folding clothes. "Are you and Conner having another date soon?" She asked, and Jane smiled and rolled her eyes.

"His name is Corny, ma," She said. "And it wasn't a date."

"If that's what you want to believe, hon," Edna chuckled to herself.

Jane sort of missed it when Tracy wasn't on the show, when she'd come running home and they'd watch the Corny Collin's show together. Now it was sort of an awkward situation; she would watch the show with her mother, who would be dancing to herself, and making little remarks about how cute and good Tracy was, and how handsome and suave "Cranky" was.

She would tap her feet to the rhythm of the songs, but that was it. She tried to stay concentrated on Tracy or Link or someone else instead of looking at Corny, and she didn't know why. Every time her eyes will fall upon him, she would actually feel giddy. It was strange, like nothing she had ever felt before.

"Hon, maybe you should go pick up Tracy," Her mother said in the middle of the kids trying out a new dance move. "I can give you some money and you two can go see a movie or something!"

She was about to say no, her and Tracy can go to the movie when Tracy gets home, but her eyes fell on the television again, and her eyes met those of Corny's. "Sure, ma." She said as she got up from the couch. Her mother handed her some money, and she grabbed a handful of peppermints and shoved them in her pocket.

"Bye daddy!" She said as she hurried downstairs, kissed her father on the cheek, and walked out of the store.

It wasn't until she was down the block that she actually came back to reality; a sense of nervousness had settled in the bottom of her stomach, and she contemplated turning around and going home. 'You're going for Tracy, not Corny, there's nothing to be nervous about.' She thought to herself as she slowly made her way to the studio.

The security guard on duty this time seemed much more intimidating, and made her feel uneasy. "I-I'm here for Tracy Turnblad, I'm her older sister."

"How do I know you're telling the truth?" He asked in a gruff voice. "Do you have any identification?"

"The only identification I have is my library card, which is-"

"Jane!" She heard Tracy's familiar squeal. "You came!" Jane looked past the security post, and saw Tracy waving energetically.

"Go ahead," The guard said as Jane walked past him.

"For a second I thought you weren't gonna come! I was lookin' all over for you." She stated happily as she bounced over to a row of mirrors and makeup. "Corny's getting' dressed, but he should be out of his room soon!"

"I'm not here for him, I'm here for you," Jane replied, looking around at the set. All around her, she could see all of the kids socializing and getting ready to go home. "Ma gave me money so we can go see a movie."

"Cool!" Tracy replied. "Maybe we can get Penny to come."

"That'll be fun, may-"

"Well, hello Baby Jane." She heard Corny's smooth voice from behind her. Swiftly, and with a little excitement, she turned around and saw him standing with his arms crossed. "You can't get enough of me, eh?"

She didn't anything, and she just gave him a small smile, and took a peppermint out of her pocket, and sliding it into her mouth. She glanced over at Tracy, who was facing her mirror, smiling to herself as she combed her hair.

"Now tell me Baby Jane, what are you doing tonight?" He flashed his famous grin.

"Me and Tracy were just-" In mid sentence, Tracy elbowed her really hard in the side. She gasped, grabbing her side, and looked over to Tracy who was shaking her head and mouthing something. "Actually," She said, weakly, letting go of her side. "I'm not doing anything." She glanced over a Tracy again, who smiled and flashed a quick thumbs up.

"Good," He smirked as he walked past them. "I'll pick you up at seven thirty."

Once he was out of sight, Jane pushed the comb out of Tracy's hand, making her giggle. "Why would you do that?" She whispered. "I thought we were going to a movie."

Tracy laughed, and covered her mouth. "You're kinda funny lookin' when you're mad, Jane," She said. "And he really, really likes you. I can tell he talked about how he had a good time with you last night!"

"He talked about me?"

"Only to me!" Tracy said quickly. "And he was in a really great mood, too!"

The moment they walked into the living room, they were greeted by the smell of food and fabric softener. "I thought you two were going to go see a movie," Their mother called from the kitchen.

"We were," Tracy said happily. "But Janie's gotta 'nother date with Corny!"

"Really?" Edna asked excitedly as she came into the living room. Jane

could feel her face going red as she sat down on the couch.

"It's not a date," Jane said as she lay down. "It was all Tracy's idea; she's the one who made me tell him I wasn't doing anything tonight."

"If I didn't give you my guidance, you wouldn't be going on your date with Corny tonight. Maybe he'll teach you how to drive!"

"Hon, he's going to teach you how to drive?" Edna asked. "Boy, that's very promising!"

"Ma!" Jane exclaimed.

"I know, ma!" Tracy exclaimed. "This is probably the most exciting thing, ever!"

Jane rolled her eyes. "It's not that exciting," She said, and she felt like they weren't even listening. "It's not like we're actually dating or anything. He's just a friend."

"He sent you flowers, though," Edna said.

"And he's going to teach you how to drive!" Tracy said as she sat down next to Jane. "And he really likes you, I can tell he does! This is just so groovy!"

"This is just so excitin'!" Edna said to herself. "You know what: I'm going to iron one of your best dresses for tonight. Oh, I know exactly which one! That pretty white one you wore to your friends party!"

"Ma, that was nearly two years ago," Jane said. "I don't even know if I still have it." She hadn't been to a party in almost two years, since the summer she graduated high school. The parties her peers had in college seemed bigger than the one's she had been too, and she was too afraid to ever go to one (now, she thought it funny that she wasn't hurt at one of those 'wild' parties, but walking home late one night).

"Maybe Corny will take you to parties!" Tracy exclaimed as Edna retired into her daughter's bedroom in search for the dress.

She remembered back when she was a junior in high school, and she had her first date. His name was Tommy and he was in her Geography class, and sat directly behind her. She didn't talk to him much, but every day, fifteen minutes into class he would kick her chair and then proceed to ask for a pencil, every day. She didn't think much of it, except for the fact that he always seemed to lose the many pencils she gave him; but, one morning when she walked into class, there was a piece of folded paper on her desk which read: I think I should repay you for all those pencils, how about dinner on Friday night? She didn't feel obliged to say yes to him, but something inside her, despite the fact that they have had little contact with one another, told her that she couldn't say no (it was probably the fact that all of her friends had been on their first dates ages before her, and she finally wasn't going to be out of the loop). Once she told her family about it, it was like they were in a craze: Tracy pranced around, singing about Janie's new boyfriend, her father paced around and ran his hands through his hair, and her mother spent hours

ironing this one particular dress of Jane's, making sure it was perfect. Even she changed; she made sure her hair looked nicer, and that she wore her best.

Her present situation reminded her of that time in junior year, except for the fact that there was no second date with Tommy (although she would still like to mask whatever she had with Corny as a friendly outing); and her father seemed less precarious now than before. But other than that, it was like the mother and sister from her past had come back to her.

"I couldn't find that white one anywhere," Edna said from the bedroom. "But how about this one?" She asked as she stuck out a blue dress that Jane didn't even recognize.

"That's fine, ma," Jane replied as her mother began ironing it. Tracy had gone to their bedroom to do her homework (at least that is what she told their mother). "I'm going to go see if dad needs help with the shop,"

"Don't be down there too long, you'll need time to get ready." Edna called after her.

"Hi, daddy," Jane said as she sat down on the stool next to her father, who was selling a customer a Tracy wig.

When the customer left, Wilbur diverted his attention to his oldest daughter. "Sweetheart," He said in a loving tone as he kissed her cheek. "What is going on up there? I could hear your mother and your sister through the ceiling,"

"Ma and Tracy are just going on about how I have another date with Corny," Jane replied, and Wilbur raised his eyebrows. "It's not a date though. We're not dating."

"I didn't say there was a problem with you dating your friend,"

"I'm just saying," Jane said.

"It does seem like you two are pretty close to dating, though," Wilbur smiled.

"Daddy!"

"I'm just sayin'," He shrugged, smiling. "You have fun with your friend now." He winked as he kissed his daughter's forehead. Jane slowly slid off of the stool and went back into the upstairs.

"Janie!" She heard Edna call (more like giggle) from outside. "Your friend's here for you!" Once she had returned from her father's shop, Jane had took the dress that her mother was ironing, and got ready in her room, and stayed there for the next hour reading. She got up from her bed and came into the living room, where Corny was standing with her father, mother, and sister.

"Hey Jane," He smiled. "Why, aren't you a pretty picture tonight?" Tracy giggled, and Edna flashed an 'I ironed and picked out your dress, so I'm basically responsible for this compliment' look; Wilbur's face remained, for the first time in a long time,

straight.

She remembered that night, the night when she dreadfully called her father from the hospital in Washington, tearfully begging him to come get her. She remembered waiting and waiting for him to come, and when he finally did, he looked different. He looked older, and so different from the comical man she had grown up with. That was the last time she had seen her father with a straight, almost emotionless face.

"Oh, Conner, don't you look handsome," Edna said, and Jane nearly died. Corny laughed and ran a hand through his hair.

"Why thank you, Mrs. Turnblad." Faintly, Jane could hear Tracy correcting her mother a little impatiently.

Jane started to walk towards the door. "Bye ma, bye daddy," She said, and Corny started to follow her.

"Young man, can you stay here for a moment?" Her father asked, and Jane froze, looking at her father, and then Corny, who was grinning.

"Of course I can, Mr. Turnblad."

"Janie, go down in the shop and wait for your friend." She hesitated. "He'll be down quickly."

And so she obeyed. The next five minutes she spent sitting on the stool in her father's dark shop seemed like an eternity. "Ready to go, Baby Jane?" He grinned, drumming his hands against the counter.

11. Another Incident

Out of nowhere, as they sat in a secluded booth at the ice cream parlor, he kissed her. It was more like an extended peck on the lips rather than a grotesque kiss, but she was still surprised. When he did it, she hardened like stone, and felt salty tears burning in the corners of her eyes. Her breathing became deep, as though she couldn't possibly get enough air in her lungs with just one breath. Before the tears spilled down her face, she turned her head hastily, burying her face in the stiff red nylon seat.

"Jane?" He asked softly, she could feel the concern in his voice.

"_You're a pretty girl Jane._"

"Jane?" He repeated, and she felt him slide next to her, and he put his hands on her shoulders. "Are you alright?"

Quickly, she wiped the tears from her eyes and sat up. She shook her head and plastered a fake smile on her face. "I'm fine," She said, her voice hoarse. "I'm fine, I was just surprised."

"Janeâ€"are you crying?"

Still trying to forge a smile, she bit her upper lip, feeling the

tears burn in her eyes once more. She remembered the smell of alcohol and the metallic taste of blood in her mouth. With uneven breathing, she tried to laugh, but it sounded more like a yelp. Corny looked at her, his dark eyes twinkling with confusion. "No," She shook her head, her fake smile growing bigger. "That's silly. I'm just being silly, there's nothing wrong."

"Are you sure?" He asked as he put his hand on her shoulder, making her jump. He looked even more confused, and she felt just plain dumb.

There was a sense of disappointment on his face, but he just didn't understand. He couldn't understand, even if she told him everything. She turned, facing where Corny was once sitting, and he just sat there, looking at her. She wanted to cry. "Um," He cleared his throat. "Maybe I should take you home."

She didn't answer. He slid out of the booth, and as though she was possessed by some spirit, she absent mindedly did the same. He doesn't say anything else, just looks stone-faced as he opens the door for her, goes to his side of the car, and drives her to her house. Before she could open the car door herself, he got out of his seat and opened it for her. "I'll see you later, Baby Jane." He said sadly. He leaned forward, like he was going to kiss her cheek, but stops in his tracks. "I'm sorry." He said before getting back in his car and leaving.

She felt like an idiot, standing in the middle of the sidewalk, staring straight ahead at where Corny's car was once parked. She sighed before climbing in the entrance of her father's shop. "Baby girl!" Her father cried from behind the register. "How was your date?" He winked.

Jane shrugged. "It was nice."

"Did he treat you good?"

"Yes, daddy."

"Did he pay for your food?"

"Why does that matter?" She asked, opening the door that lead to their apartment.

"It matters a great deal, baby girl!" He cried. "If a man doesn't pay for a ladies food-"

"He did, daddy. He was a perfect gentleman and everything went swell." She interrupted, shutting the door behind her hastily.

"Momma, Jane's home!" She heard Tracy cry from their bedroom as Jane shut the front door behind her. Jane sighed; she wasn't going to catch a break tonight. She sat on the couch in the living room and shuffled through the clothes her mother had ironed. Her mother scurried into the living room as Tracy threw herself on the couch next to her sister.

"How was it?" Tracy asked, excitement dripping from her words. "What did you guys do? Was it romantic?"

"Tracy," Edna chuckled to herself as she hit Tracy with a dish towel. "Stop askin' her so many questions and let her answer 'em! So dear, how was it?"

"It was _great_," Jane replied, nodding her head as she emphasized the word great. "Corny's a real sweet guy, but I wouldn't call it a da-"

"Oh quit it with these 'friendly outings'!" Tracy cried, sitting up in her seat. "It's a date and you know it! Corny's just _crazy_ over you!"

Jane shook her head. "I don't think it's anything serious."

"What?" Asked Tracy, appalled. "Nothing serious? He's buyin' you flowers and he's gonna teach you how to drive! If that isn't serious I'm not sure what is then!"

"Tracy's gotta point, now!" Edna exclaimed. "Why when your daddy first started courtin' me we did all sorts of reckless things like that! And now look at us, married with two _beautiful_ girls!"

"That means you and Corny are going to have babies!" Tracy screamed, making Edna and Jane jump/

"I don't think so," Jane said, but her mother and sister don't notice.

"They'd be so gorgeous!" Tracy cried as she grabbed her sisters arm. "Oh Corny is so dreamy, and Jane's so cuteâ€"I can just picture their babies now!"

Even Edna got caught up in the hype of the hypothetical situation. "I can picture them haivin' a little boy and a little girl," She said, looking into space dreamily. "They'd have his dark hair and her pretty eyesâ€"oh I'm getting excited just thinkin' 'bout it!"

Jane held her breath. "The library closes at nine," She said, standing up. "I'm going run there and get a book before it closes."

Edna and Tracy nodded as they continued to fantasize about Jane's supposed future. Jane left the back way as to not run into her father and have him question her on her "date" since she pretty much ruined her chances of having another outing with Corny again.

When she walked into the library, she felt a bit out of place seeing that the approximately two people that were there were dressed casually, and she was all dolled up. Looking for nothing in particular, she weaved in and out of the bookshelves, running her fingers across the spines of the old books. Finally, when she decided that she should be getting home, she stopped her finger in the middle of one of the bookshelves, and slid that book out of the shelf. Slowly she brought the book to the front counter, where the head librarian was working. There was minimal talking, until Jane took a peppermint out of the bowl on the desk and said: "Have a good night."

"Be careful with that book, it's supposed to rain." Was the

librarian's response.

Jane walked as slowly as she could, trying to take as long as she possibly could. She was sick of hearing of Corny Collins and how he was just crazy about her, how they were dating and how it was just so dreamy that he was going to teach her how to drive. She just wanted to breathe, to take time to herself where no one was talking about Corny or her, especially after tonight.

She still couldn't believe that she actually cried when he kissed her; it wasn't even like he was trying to do anything to her, he was just trying to be nice and romantic, and she blew it. He was just trying to be friendly, and she had to ruin it.

By the time she got back to her house, all she wanted to do was crawl into bed and pretend like none of this happened. She entered her father's closed shop, and walked up all the stairs that led to their apartment. Before she walked in, she heard people talking. As she opened the door, she just assumed that it was her parents and Tracy.

However, when she walked into the living room she saw that her family wasn't alone.

There, sitting before her, drinking a cup of iced tea with her parents and Tracy was Corny Collins. He was smiling, but despite this smile, he still had that sense of sadness in his eyes. Jane stopped dead in her tracks.

"Hey, Janie," He said somberly, placing his glass down on a coaster. "I know it hasn't been a long time, but I went help and couldn't stop thinkin' 'bout our time at the diner, but you weren't home so I decided to wait for you."

Jane just stood there, staring at Corny in disbelief. As she looked at him, she tried to remember if she saw his car outside when she came home. She must have been so focused on taking as much time as she possibly could, she didn't notice.

"I just wanted to talk to you," Corny said, standing up.

Jane still didn't say anything. "Corny told us about your time on your date," Wilbur said. Jane exhaled.

"We can leave you two alone in here if you want." Edna told them as the three of them stand up, preparing to leave the room.

"I think we should go outside," Jane said as she pursed her lips and left the room with Corny behind her.

12. A Revelation

It had started to rain lightly. They stood by Corny's car with the raindrops falling down on their heads. Her arms were still crossed at her chest, and his hands were shoved in his pockets. "I was just worried," He told her, as she bit her lower lip. "I've met girls who were uncomfortable by kissin' and stuff but I never once made anyone cry. So I went to your house to see if you were alright and you weren't home and I didn't know what to do so I told Tracy about what

happened and your folks heard and they told me that you hadn't been the same since that incident last spring, that you were traumatized-

"_What_?" Jane asked, shaking.

"Th-they didn't say much, baby Jane," He said, leaning against the hood of his car. "They just said that somethin-"

"That's none of your business!" Jane shrieked, her hands clenched into fists at her side. "They shouldn't have said anything!"

"Look," Corny said calmly as he walked towards her. She stepped backward, almost stumbling on the curb. "If something's happened, I think I should knowâ€"

"It's my choice to tell you, though! My choice! If it happens to me, I think I get to choose who I tell." Jane said, her voice shaking.

"I think I would have to know what happened eventually, baby Jane." Corny said, a frown growing on his face.

"_Eventually_!" Jane cried out in frustration. As she yelled her chest heaved in and out with uneven breaths. "I didn't want you to know yet. You were the only one who didn't know, who didn't look at me funny. It was just like it was before it happened."

"I don't even know what happened." Corny said quietly, looking down at his feet. "And it's not like it was before whatever happened."

She clenched her jaw, and he looked up at her. "Unless you used to cry when boys kissed you and got all tensed up and nervous all the time. I just want to know what your folks were talkin' bout Jane, to help youâ€"

"You think you can help?" Jane cried as she stood closer to him. She wouldn't ever be able to tell what came over her that day, as the rain started falling harder on their heads. Corny looked at her, his eyes sad and his million-dollar smile absent. Tears fell down her face with the rain as she stood there, hitting her fists against her thighs in frustration. "You want to know what happened?" A lump grew in her throat as she began to shake.

"I was a freshman in college, carefree and happy, under the impression that nothing could happen to me. It was late one night and I was walking to my room from four buildings away from my dorm when some guy I don't know beats and rapes me. So I'm sorry if I'm scared or nervous when I'm around you because frankly I'm scared of everything. And for the first time in nearly a year I met someone who didn't know about what happened and didn't treat me like I was about to have some nervous breakdown at any moment." By the time she finished her story, she's sobbing, and the rain slid down her face, washing away her tears. She couldn't tell if Corny was crying, but she could tell that he was upset by what she just said.

"B-baby Jane," He said, reaching out his arm for her.

"No," She sobbed, inching away. "I don't want to talk about it

anymore."

Corny closed his eyes. "Jane," He said his voice hoarse. "I didn't know."

She looked at him, he leaned on his car as though he couldn't stand any more, his eyes closed and chest moving up and down slowly as he breathed. "I didn't know." He repeated.

"That's how I wanted it," her voice quivered as she talked. "I just wanted to feel _normal_ again. I know I hardly acted it but being with youâ€¦ you were just so carefree and happy and it made me feel happy and I liked it. I liked being with you."

When he opened his eyes, she could tell that he was crying. She was so used to him being on the show, or on their outings, smiling and being happyâ€"it was so surreal to see Corny Collins cry.

She reckoned that's what it was to be human.

"I'm sorry," He said, rubbing his face. "I'm sorry that I made you uncomfortable today, and I'm sorry that that guy hurt you, I just wanted to be important to you."

She cried as she turned around and walked to the door of her father's joke shop. "Baby Jane," His voice shook as he spoke to her. "You're really something special."

She shut the door to the joke shop behind her, and slid to the floor against it. She buried her face in her knees and cried. She couldn't count how many times she cried after the "incident", but she still remembered the feeling of laying on the backseat of her father's car, crying as he drove her home from school. It seemed like an eternity had passed by when she heard Corny's car start and him drive away from the shop.

Floods of anger and sadness hit her as she lay on the floor of her father's shop. Angry at the fact that she just walked away, angry at the man who did this to her, and sad because Corny left. If this was some dramatic novel, she'd be the damsel in distress (as clichÃ©d as that sounds) and Corny would be some gallant prince that would come and save her with his good looks and chivalry. In every story there's always a climax, so shouldn't that work for real life too? Jane doubted that, or else she would have been happy long ago.

She felt like she had been laying on the floor of the shop for hours, and although it probably hadn't been hours it had been a long time, and Jane was surprised that at least one of her family members hadn't have come down to check on her yet. Slowly, she stood up and wiped the tears from her eyes (although that didn't really matter, seeing that all the crying she did and being left in the rain left her looking like a mess) and slowly walked up the stairs that lead to the apartment for what seemed to be the millionth time that day. She stood by the door, her hand gingerly laying on the doorknob as she tried to see if she could hear her family saying anything. She didn't hear anything. She assumed that her family was doing the same things they did every night; Tracy would be in their room singing and dancing to records, and her mother would be in the dining room ironing and folding laundry as well as yelling at Tracy about how loud she was being, while her father would be in his and Edna's room

going over the receipts and paperwork for the shop. And Jane, well, she'd be a distraught mess.

Everything would be normal.

Jane took a deep breath as she opened the door, and saw that her assumption had been wrong. The nightly news played quietly on the television in the living room, but nobody was there. She peaked in the cracked door of her and Tracy's room to see Tracy in there, but not dancing as she usually did every moment of every day. The only question that was left was where her parents wereâ€”probably in their bedroom, talking about what Corny had told them about their "date".

Before anyone could figure out that she was home, Jane locked herself in the bathroom. She looked at herself in the mirror to see that she looked just as bad as she felt. Her face was beat red, and her eyes were puffy and bloodshot. She ran herself a bath, and sat there for a good hour, thinking about how good everything would be if she hadn't been so stupid to walk home alone at night.

It was all her fault; she had always subtly blamed herself for getting rapedâ€”even though the police and doctors at the hospital told her it wasn't her fault, that the person who did this was a sick man who deserved to be locked up where he belonged. But she blamed herself. It was probably unrealistic and stupid of her, but with all seriousness, she wouldn't have gotten raped if she hadn't decided to walk to her dorm alone so late at night. She thought she was invincible, and that she could do anything, she never once expected herself to get in the situation that she did. She just thought that she could walk to her dorm and go to bed and that everything would be normal. Boy was she dumb.

Nothing would ever be normal. She would never feel like herself again, she would never have any stability in her life.

Corny was the closest thing to stability that she had. But now, he knew about what happened to her, about the dreadful mistake that she made. And now, he was going to look at her differently, like she was about to break at any given moment. It wasn't going to be the same. That's if he even wants to see her again, after she blew up on him this evening.

She wrapped herself in a towel and quietly made her way into her room. Tracy was lying on the foot of her bed, reading one of those teen gossip magazines. The two sisters stared at each other for a few moments before Tracy went back to her magazine and Jane got dressed. "You probably don't want to hear this," Tracy begins as Jane slid into her bed. Jane didn't say anything, just watched Tracy carefully as she moved the bedside table to the other side of the room, and pushed her bed next to Jane's. Tracy laid next to her sister, and rested her head on Jane's shoulder. "But Corny was really worried. He came here nearly cryin' because he thought that he made you really upset, and we didn't want to tell him about what happened last summer, but when he said that you started cryin' daddy wanted to make sure that he knew it wasn't his fault."

Jane didn't answer, just rested her head on top of Tracy's. The two of them sat there in complete silence for a few minutes before Jane coughed. "I told him about it," Her voice was hoarse and cracked, and

didn't sound like hers. "I yelled at him and walked away, really. He's not going to want to see me again."

"You don't know that, Jane, he's cr-"

"Don't say he's crazy over me," Jane interrupted. "Please, don't. Just for one night I don't want to hear about Corny Collins and how he's crazy over me and how we're gonna get married and have a boy and a girl and all that stuff. It's just that for one night I don't want to hear any of it. I just want to go to bed." Jane sighed, rubbing her eyes.

"I'm sorry," Tracy said as she kissed her sister's cheek, Jane didn't say anything. "I wish things were better for you, Jane." Tracy added sadly, before leaning down into the bed.

Jane wished the same thing every day.

Eventually, Tracy got out of bed to turn the light off, and the sounds of her snoring filled the room.

Jane wished things were different every day.

13. A Parental Mishap

It had been days since the incident with Corny, and she hadn't heard from him since. Even though Tracy continued to go to do the show, Jane had barely heard anything about it besides the usual gossip of: "Didya know that Tammy stuffs her bra?" or various "Link is just _so dreamy_, I wish he would just notice me for once!" Nowadays, everything was centered around Link more-so than ever before; how great his hair was, his beautiful smile, how great he dressed, smelled, look, sung, dancedâ€"basically, in the eyes of her teenaged sister, Link Larkin was a god on Earth. Even though she begged Tracy not to talk about Corny himself, Jane couldn't help but to think of him. How he smiled, how sleek and groovy he looked dancingâ€"it all made Jane sad.

Part of her wanted to ask Tracy if Corny asked about her, wondered how she was doing, or wanted to see her again. But, like always, she was afraid; afraid of what he would say. Whether he would admit to wanting to see her again, or whether he didn't want to deal with someone who was so broken.

It was almost dinner time, and Tracy hadn't come home yet. Edna paced around the dining room, chewing on her finger nails. "Oh where could she be," She would say aloud to herself. Trying not to let worry for her little sister overcome her, Jane sat on the living room couch, reading The Great Gatsby for the umpteenth time. Out of nowhere the phone began to ring, making Jane jump out of her seat. With her eyes still on the pages in her book, she tried to see if she could make anything out of her mother's conversation.

"Oh Janie!" Her mother cried as she ran into the living room, her purse clutched in her hand. "I need to go to the neighborhoods to get your sisterâ€"she left school with a couple of people from detention. Oh my goodness, I can't believe this!"

"Ma, do you want me to come with you?" Jane asked, sitting up in her

seat. Edna quickly began to shake her head.

"I don't need both of my daughters there!" She replied. "Oh I'm so nervous for her, you know ever since she was on that, that Candy Collins show I feel like she's been with the wrong crowd."

"It's Corny, ma," Jane said to herself as Edna hurriedly kissed Jane's head and scurried out of house to get Tracy from "the hoods". Jane sighed, and tried to read more of the book, but began to feel dissatisfied. She left her book on the couch and went down to her father's joke shop.

"Baby girl," Wilbur smiled from behind the counter. Jane kissed him on the cheek and sat down in the stool next to the register. There were two pre-teen boys in the shop, and that was it. "How are you, my baby girl?" He asked cheerfully. Whenever he called her 'baby girl' she could hear Corny saying 'baby Jane'.

There must be something wrong with her; she never mulled over boys, getting upset whenever something went wrong. Hell, she never really cared about dating in general. Were she and Corny really even dating? That whole friendly outing thing sounds so dumb to her now.

"I'm good, daddy. I was just reading upstairs. Ma went to go get Tracy at a friend's," She found it irrelevant to tell her father about the "scandalous" deeds of her little sister. But, the moment she mentioned her home-body mother was out to get her sister, Wilbur knew something was up. He merely shook his head and said: "Tracy's causing trouble again," he laughed to himself.

She sat there, playing with the gag gifts her father had displayed on the counter, trying to keep herself occupied. "What have you been up to?" She asked her father as she squeezed a small, rubber pig so it'd poop in her hand.

"What I do every day!" He replied happily. "I'm spending time in the Taj Mahal of joke shops, just like I dreamed."

Jane smiled as her father proudly looked around the shop, satisfied with the years of hard work he put into his shop. "You know, Jane," He said slowly, the smile still big on his face. "It's pretty great, living your dreams. It's a hard road, let me tell you, but it's a satisfying one indeed." Jane just looked at him, her lips pursed. "It's never too late for you, Janeâ€"to follow your dreams. Look at me! I'm an old man, but I have the greatest wife, the world's sweetest girls, and this shop. It don't look like much, but it's a dream. Look at Tracy, dancing her heart away on that showâ€"it may look frivolous and foolish, but that's her dream. And your mother, she loves her laundress work, just _loves_ it and takin' care of you and Tracy, why that's her dream. And you, you could be that English teacher you dreamed of being ever since I could remember. It's never too late."

Jane rested her chin in her hands, and smiled at her father. "You gotta chase those dreams, baby girl." His eyes sparkled with every word he said, as though they were saying: "you can do anything". Smiling, Jane kissed her father's cheek. "You're the best, daddy." She said, giving him a one-armed hug before bouncing up the stairs to the apartment.

The encouragement from her father was enough to make her feel good, which made her feel like things were slightly normal so far. She sat back down on the couch, and delved into her book. An hour had gone by, and her mother and Tracy still weren't home, and she found herself getting drowsy as she listened to the hands tick on the clock on the wall, and soon enough she found herself asleep on the couch.

After a questionable amount of time, Jane woke up to her mother's sobs. Groggily, she rubbed her eyes and sat up. Her mother's sobs penetrated the otherwise completely silent home, and quickly got up off of the couch and headed towards her parents room, where Tracy stood in the doorway. Her mother laid in bed, eating a piece of chocolate cake and crying. Jane looked at Tracy inquisitively, Tracy herself looked sad and alone. Before Tracy could say anything, Edna sobbed: "It looks like none of us have luck with men! They're all cursed!" and continued to sob on the top of her lungs.

Tracy and Jane tiptoed out of the hallway and back into the living room, where they both sat on the couch. Tracy began by telling Jane of her woes, how she, Link, Penny, and Seaweed went to Motormouth Maybelle's record shop after school. Tracy explained that there was going to be a rally tomorrow to promote integration, and how Link told her that maybe she was "too big" of an adventure. "I'm fine, really," She said to Jane as Jane's mouth hung open in shock to Link's insensitivity. Even though Tracy swore she was fine, Jane knew her sister all too well—and the tears that welled in Tracy's eyes as she talked didn't help her, either. "But anyway," Tracy said. "Me and ma came home and you were sleeping on the couch and we just left you there because I didn't want to talk about what happened and ma went to go do something, and I was just layin' in bed lookin' through my magazines and eatin' a Baby Ruth and ma comes stormin' cryin' 'cause she said she saw daddy with Velma von Tussle or something like that and was absolutely devastated and I tried telling her that daddy wouldn't do anything like that to her, but she just won't listen. And ma won't let me dance on Corny's show any more—but I don't think I want to if people aren't going to be treated equally."

Jane hugged her sister. "I'm proud of you, Trace," She said as she patted her shoulder. "For standing up for what is right."

The look of sadness slowly started to disappear from her eyes, but was still there as she smiled at her older sister. "What are we going to do about them," Tracy asked, motioning her head towards their parents room as a loud sob erupted from their mother.

"You take daddy, I'll take ma?" Jane suggested. "I assume he's sleeping in the shop."

"It sounds like a plan," Tracy smiled weakly as she got off of the couch and left the apartment. Jane sat there for a while, listening to the sound of Tracy going down the stairs and once the noise stopped she slowly made her way into her mother's room.

Her mother was in the same position that Jane and Tracy had left her in—sitting in the middle of her bed eating and crying loudly. Jane sighed to herself as she crawled into bed next to her. "Now ma," She said slowly, trying to figure out what she was going to say to her. "You really can't believe that daddy would do something like this to

you," Edna wailed as Jane bit her lower lip, wishing she had been a little more sincere. "Ma, he's crazy about you. Why, earlier today he was talking about how he was living his dream because he had you as a wonderful wife."

Edna paused mid-bite. "R-really?" She sniffled and rubbed her eyes.

"Yes," Jane assured. "He talked about how you were always there for him, and how you made his dreams come true. You can't certainly believe, after all these years, that daddy would do something like this to you?"

Edna wailed again as Jane leaned back into her father's pillows, sighing deeply. "You should believe me, ma. Daddy loves you with all his heart and nothing in the world would change that." The two of them were silent, with the exception of Edna's loud sniffles. "Ma," She muttered, leaning deeper in her father's feather pillows. Before she could say anything she heard the front door open, and Tracy sneak towards their room. She couldn't tell if her father had followed Tracy to their home, but Jane sure hoped so. Edna wailed once more, and tiredly, Jane kissed her head. "You'll see," she whispered to herself as she left the room.

To her delight, when Jane stepped into the hallway, she saw her father quietly standing there. "You need to talk to her, daddy. She won't listen to me at all, but maybe she'll believe you if you tell her yourself." Edna continued to cry from her parent's room. Jane sighed sadly and hugged her father. "I hope things go well," She sighed as she went to her room.

Tracy was lying on her bed, sighing to herself sadly as she read her teen heartthrob magazines. Jane continued to read The Great Gatsby until she started getting bored with it. "How are you feeling, Trace?" She asked.

Tracy shrugged. "Just dandy," She said in a miserable manner. "I think I'm going to hit the hay early tonight." Tracy stretched before getting beneath her blankets. Jane didn't feel very tired after the nap she had taken earlier, so she went into the living room and started folding the rest of the laundry her mother had out. After a while, her mother's sobs began to stop. Eventually, her parents left their room and went to the back patio. Jane wasn't sure what time it was when she fell asleep, but she remembered waking up to:

"Wilbur"oh my God Wilbur she's gone!" And her mother running into the doorway of Tracy and Jane's room.

End
file.